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**THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF
AUSTRALIA IN THE WAR
OF 1914-1918
VOLUME VI
THE A.I.F. IN FRANCE:
MAY 1918—THE ARMISTICE**

THE
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE
IN FRANCE

DURING THE ALLIED OFFENSIVE, 1918

BY
C. E. W. BEAN

With 530 illustrations and maps

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PREFACE

THE publication of this volume brings to an end the production of the *Australian Official History of the War 1914-18* nearly twenty-three years after the writing of it was begun at Tuggranong Homestead, near Canberra. The time taken has been due mainly to the detailed character of the narrative, but also partly to the fact that, even with regard to the main course of the campaigns described, the work has been largely pioneering. Not only the events of Gallipoli, Palestine, and New Guinea, but those of 1916 (First Somme) and 1917 (German Withdrawal, Bullecourt, Messines and Third Ypres) had to be grappled with before the British official history of them was available, although Sir James Edmonds and his staff constantly gave generous and invaluable help. For the earlier part of 1918 the British History was published before the Australian, and was of utmost assistance; but the present volume again traverses ground which is largely virgin, at least for official history. Again Sir James Edmonds, still steadily proceeding with his great work in wartime England, has largely helped with advice and by making some of his chapters available as they were finished.

This volume deals with those months in which the First World War turned against the German Army on the Western Front, and shows in detail how, in the crucial Amiens sector, that change was brought about: the first chapter shows by what kind of men, and the rest of the book by what kind of methods (actually by a most aggressive defence leading up to attack). It had been intended to add, in appendices, short notes upon certain interesting aspects of army legal administration; on the remarkable work of headquarters of the Australian Mining Corps (the A.E. and M.M. and B. Coy., perhaps better known as the "alphabetical company") in all armies of the B.E.F.; and on the Australian railway operating companies.

It had also been intended to devote this preface largely to

corrections or additions, particularly one relating to the origin of Quinn's Post in Gallipoli—as to which a long-realised gap in the records has been covered by an interesting statement from Sergt. H. E. Pugsley¹ of the 11th Battalion, who was first sent to that indentation by Maj. Drake Brockman on the morning of the Anzac Landing, and appears to have held his troops and the New Zealanders there, despite orders from a superior to retire.

But the completion of the story of the final offensive in 1918 finds a second world war in its third year; and both the length of this volume and the necessity to avoid further delay in its publication have made the inclusion of these additions impossible. Fortunately, however, an opportunity of dealing with these matters is afforded by the intention of the Australian War Memorial Board to issue shortly, as a separate publication, a general index of the twelve volumes of the present history. The appendices and corrections will be included in that publication.

In closing his work the Editor must again acknowledge the indebtedness of himself and his colleagues in authorship—first, to Sir G. F. Pearce, Mr. Andrew Fisher, Mr. W. M. Hughes, and successive Prime Ministers, Governments, and Ministers and Secretaries for Defence, whose patience alone has enabled the task to be carried through with thoroughness; next to Generals White, Bridges, Birdwood, Monash, Chauvel and Hamilton, whose support made it possible for most of the military narrative to be based on first hand observation and evidence; third to old comrades of the First A.I.F. of every rank for their unfailing readiness to help both during the First World War and since; to the British Official Historian, Sir James Edmonds, and his staff; to authorities in charge of the military records of Great Britain, France, Germany, Turkey, New Zealand, Canada and (in the case of the present volume) the United States; to Colonel A. Graham Butler, who is sacrificing not only his livelihood but his health in order to provide his countrymen with a history of their Army Medical Service of which the second volume is a widely prized text-book in the present war, and is largely drawn on in these pages; to the publishers and printers, Government and other, of both State

¹ Regtl. Sgt.-Maj. H. E. Pugsley (No. 222; 11th and 51st Bns.). Timber worker; of Ferguson, W.A.; b. Taunton, Somerset, Eng., 10 May 1883.

and Commonwealth, and their staffs, who have constantly given this work an attention going far beyond any contractual obligations; to the Director and staff of the Australian War Memorial who have made this undertaking a part of their own—the work of Mr. E. L. Keage in classifying the immense files of war documents has not previously been acknowledged in these pages; to newspapers and the R.S.S.I.L.A., which have regularly helped the search for information; to many others, but foremost, to Mr. J. Balfour, responsible for checking and indexing the work, Mr. A. W. Bazley in charge of the historian's records and correspondence (and, since his call in 1939 to another task, Miss Ida McAulay),² and Mr. W. S. Perry, successor to Mr. P. R. Wightman in the production of the maps and sketches—who together have formed the backbone of the small staff that has carried through this long task with devotion and thoroughness.

C. E. W. B.

*Victoria Barracks,
Sydney,
21st May, 1942.*

² Mr. Bazley, now on the staff of the Australian War Memorial has extended his help by dealing with records of technical services.

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CHRONOLOGY

(*Italic type indicates events dealt with in this volume.*)

1918.

- May 27—Battle of the Aisne 1918 begins.
 " 31—*Monash succeeds Birdwood as G.O.C. Australian Corps.*
- June 9—German offensive at Noyon.
 " 15—Austrian offensive against Italians on Piave.
- July 4—*Battle of Hamel.*
 " 15—Germans thrust towards Paris across the Marne.
 " 18—Franco-American counter-attack north of the Marne.
 " 21—Château Thierry retaken by Allied forces.
- Aug. 8—*Battle of Amiens begins.*
 " 13—The Czecho-Slovaks declare war on Germany.
 " 21—*Battle of Albert 1918 begins.*
 " 26—Battle of the Scarpe.
 " 29—*Battle of Mont St. Quentin begins.*
- Sept. 1—*Occupation of Péronne.*
 " 18—*Battle of Epéhy (and Hindenburg Outpost-Line).*
 " 19—Final offensive in Palestine opens.
 " 27—Bulgaria asks for an armistice. Battle of Canal du Nord begins.
 " 28—Battle of Flanders Ridges begins.
 " 29—*Battle of St. Quentin Canal (final breaking of the Hindenburg Line) begins.*
 " 30—Armistice with Bulgaria signed.
- Oct. 1—Damascus taken by British and Arab forces.
 " 3—*Battle of the Beuverevoir Line.*
 " 4—Germany and Austria-Hungary seek an armistice through U.S.A.
 " 5—*Battle of Montbrechain.*
 " 24—Final Italian offensive begins.
 " 26—Aleppo (Syria) taken by British forces.
 " 27—General Ludendorff resigns.
 " 30—Armistice signed by Turkey.

- Nov. 3—Armistice with Austria-Hungary signed. Mutiny breaks out in German fleet at Kiel.
- „ 4—British and French advance beyond Scheldt. Americans reach Meuse.
- „ 8—German Armistice delegates meet Allied G.H.Q.
- „ 9—Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates.
- „ 11—Capture of Mons. *Armistice with Germany signed.*
- „ 21—German Fleet surrenders.
- 1919.
- Jan. 18—Peace Conference opens at Versailles.
- June 28—Peace Treaty signed and published.

ADDENDA AND CORRIGENDA

Page 71, for 4th-7th May, 1918 read 4th May, 1918.

Page 89, footnote 63, line 6, for A. O. Oakhill read C. O. Oakhill.

Page 124, footnote 40, after 1896 add (In the impetuous approach Besemeres leading his platoon in file had to halt, waiting for a lift of the barrage. In the pause he lit a cigarette which the Germans apparently saw. He presently stumbled on the edge of a trench, and almost fell on a German, who shot him and was shot by him. The man behind Besemeres, Pte. W. Reed—who had been badly wounded at Krithia, discharged, and re-enlisted—rushed the post and a lucky bomb from a man in rear put the garrison out of action. Reed belonged to Naracoorte, S. Aust.).

Page 183, sketch map, for Cartigny read Cantigny.

Page 239, footnote 63, 2nd last line, for 449th R.I.R. read 449th I.R.

Page 431, for 2nd-29th July, 1918 read 22nd-29th July, 1918.

Page 600, footnote 52. Prisoners. On 8 Aug., 1918 the Australian Corps apparently captured 7,925 Germans (183 officers, 7,742 other ranks) and 173 guns; the figures given in *footnote 52, page 600*, are for the captures that had been counted up to midday.

In its active fighting in 1918 (Mar. 27-Oct. 5) the Corps captured 29,144 prisoners and 338 guns.

Casualties. Between June 1 and Oct. 5 the Corps lost 1,833 officers and 32,895 others, of whom 469 officers and 6,610 others were killed or died of wounds.

In the offensive, Aug. 8-Oct. 5, the Corps lost 1,317 officers and 22,845 others, of whom 12 officers and 92 others were prisoners.

Page 732, footnote 50, line 4, for Alfred G. Varley, read Alfred G. Farleigh.

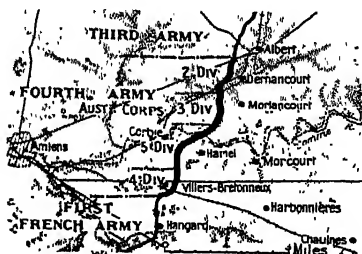
Page 794, footnote 60, for Hill 100 read Hill 110.

Page 820, for 31st Aug.-1st Sept., 1918 read 31st Aug., 1918.

CHAPTER I

THE "DIGGERS," 1918


THE fifth volume of this history left the Allies early in May, 1918, panting to regain breath, the first German offensive of the year—far the greatest attack till then in history—having been with difficulty defeated by the hard-pressed British assisted by the French. The five Australian infantry divisions, whose final operations this volume describes, had been thrown in as reserves in the later stages of the recent battle, and were left holding the line immediately in front of both Ludendorff's main objectives. The 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th Divisions (at this time forming the Australian Corps under General Birdwood) were directly in front of Amiens, astride of the Somme River—their line extending from the vital heights of Villers-Bretonneux south of the river, across the peninsula between the Somme and the Ancre, and thence over the promontory north of the Ancre, above Dernancourt, to end near Albert. The 1st Australian Division was in Flanders, in front of Hazebrouck, to defend which it had been detached from the other four by the Commander-in-Chief's own order on April 11th.



The Germans were still bringing into line divisions withdrawn from the peaceful Russian front. This source of reinforcement, though now coming to its end, had enabled them to raise their army on the Western Front to 206 divisions, of which no less than 78 were at the moment in reserve, 16 of these being fresh and another 40 refitted and available for striking another tremendous blow. Against these 206 the Allies had 172

effective divisions of which 57 were in reserve. Of the 60 British and dominion divisions then in France, 55 had been heavily engaged, and 9 of them, in addition to the two Portuguese, had been so mauled that the task of reconstituting them had, at least for the moment, been given up. The French Army had not been tried as severely as the British; although two-fifths of it had been engaged in helping the British, its proper front had not been attacked and was very thinly held. On the British front there were, at the beginning of May, 13 French divisions in addition to 51 effective British and dominion ones. On the French front were 90 French, 1 British, 4 American, and 2 Italian; 12 Belgian divisions completed the Allies' total.¹



The ground won by the Germans in March and April is hachured thus 

It was certain the Germans would use their available reserve for launching another vast offensive in the effort to force their opponents to make a harshly negotiated peace before American troops could arrive in sufficient numbers to turn the scale. It was also certain that Ludendorff would make this attack at the earliest moment at which he could complete his preparations, for his chances of success were diminishing with every shipload of Americans that reached France. The two supreme questions of the moment were: where will the blow fall? and how quickly will the Americans arrive?

The aim of the German leaders in this year's effort had been to destroy the British Army, and this was now evident, not only to the British Commander-in-Chief, Sir Douglas Haig, but to his leader, General Foch, the supreme commander of the Allied armies on the Western Front. And when, in May, the flames

¹ Four other American divisions were in France either training or assembling, and the advanced troops of five others were arriving. The 74th Brit. Div., composed of dismounted yeomanry, then beginning to arrive from Palestine, is not included in the figures. The French had also six cavalry divisions, the British three, and the Belgians one.

of the Lys and Somme offensives flickered out at Mont Kemmel and Villers-Bretonneux respectively, each of these leaders expected that Ludendorff would next strike the centre of the British front at or near Arras, which both of them held to be the vital buttress of the British Army's line.

But at this stage there developed a circumstance very disturbing for the commander-in-chief of the French Army, General Pétain. For the first time his staff found itself entirely without reliable information as to the location of the bulk of the German reserves.² Pétain naturally feared that these might be concentrating opposite the French front, about to make a leap towards Paris. The British staff, on the other hand, was of opinion that

most of the German divisions in reserve were either opposite the British sector or unfit for immediate action. Foch, believing that the object of the blow would be to complete the destruction of the British, decided to dispose the Allies' reserves to meet this eventuality, supporting the British front with French divisions additional to the considerable number already sent thither. This could only be done by arranging that the allotted French divisions should be re-

placed by British ones exhausted in recent fighting; these would be sent to the French front to recuperate in the then quiet sector on the Chemin-des-Dames in Champagne. Haig, notwithstanding the reluctance of the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Sir Henry Wilson) in London agreed,³ having first assured himself, by a frank question, that Foch was not seeking to initiate a permanent mingling of the British and French armies. He accordingly sent to the French zone four divisions that had been most severely tried



² So states the *French Official History, Tome VI, Vol. 1, pp. 523-4*. If they were in the salient created by the March offensive, it would be easy for Ludendorff to use them on either its western or its southern face.

³ Lord Milner, Secretary of State for War, concurred with Haig's view.

(including the 8th, on which, after its plucky fighting in the Fifth Army's retreat, had fallen the last German attack at Villers-Bretonneux).⁴ Headquarters of the IX Corps was also sent, to command them.

The spell that now bound the Western Front, while troops and leaders waited for some indication of the blow which they knew to be imminent, was used feverishly by the Allies chiefly for two purposes: first, for the recuperation of the British Army; second, for the assembly and training of the American divisions, which hitherto had crossed the Atlantic in numbers much smaller than first intended, but who were now to be sent over with an acceleration unsuspected by the German command. The German Army on the Western Front, like its opponents, was recuperating. Two-thirds of it had borne the strain of the great offensive which had left many of its divisions exhausted. It was evident that these were being refitted and some of them rested and trained for the next effort.

Consequently the period was, in general, one of extreme quietness; and it was during this elsewhere peaceful time that the Australian infantry both at Amiens and Hazebrouck began to play a rôle of extreme interest whether considered by itself or as part of the great drama of the Western Front. Like the troops from Canada and New Zealand, the Australians were then less exhausted than the majority of English, Scottish, and Irish divisions, having been subjected to far less strain and loss in the German offensive—a fact to be remembered in appreciating their ability to undertake the operations described in the following chapters. But, when all is said, the main clue for understanding these enterprises lies in the character of the men who carried them out; and this volume cannot more suitably start than with a contemporary sketch of the Australian infantryman as he was, at the end of exactly three years and a few weeks of campaigning, in the beginning of May, 1918.

In preface it should be said that, owing to the shrinkage of recruiting in its homeland, the Australian infantry in 1918 contained perhaps a somewhat higher proportion of veterans than did the rest of the infantry of

⁴ See Vol. V, pp. 277, 539 et seq. The other divisions sent were the 21st, 25th and 19th. The 50th had been sent in April.

the British expeditionary force. By a practice, which apparently originated among the troops of the 2nd Division but was eventually authorised in other units, men who had served at Anzac wore on their regimental colour patches an "A" embroidered in gold.⁵ The young Australian recruits, drafted in like half-wild colts, many with an almost complete disrespect for custom and authority, were probably moulded more powerfully by these senior comrades of Anzac and Pozières, and by certain natural leaders among their officers and mates, than by any other influence since they left their mothers' knees. The older men had been broken in; British observers received the impression that their "discipline had improved"—actually their will to obey had never been keener than in Gallipoli, but their training was now far more complete; on top of much that they had learnt, and invented, in fighting they had also learnt that it was useless to kick against everything that seemed unnecessary in the routine and restrictions behind the lines. For some years now military service had filled their whole outlook; it was indeed the only calling that many of them had followed. Both in the line and in peaceful areas behind it their existence was that of regular soldiers; civilian concerns, interests and ambitions, had been relegated to an almost forgotten life.

Yet at heart even the oldest Australian soldier was incorrigibly civilian. However thoroughly he accepted the rigid army methods as conditions temporarily necessary, he never became reconciled to continuous obedience to orders, existence by rule, and lack of privacy. His individualism had been so strongly implanted as to stand out after years of subordination. Even on the Western Front he had exercised his vote in the Australian elections and in the referendums as to conscription, and it was largely through his own act in these ballots that the Australian people had rejected conscription and that, to the end, the A.I.F. consisted entirely of volunteers. He was subject to no death penalty for disobedience or failure to face the enemy.⁶

His outlook contrasted sharply with that of most English soldiers of that time, whose discipline was largely founded on

⁵ Also, as in the British Army, men wore on the right sleeve a chevron for every year of service, red for 1914 and blue for each subsequent year; and a single gilt stripe for each time they had been wounded. The first known suggestion of the "A" for Anzac was made by General Gellibrand to General Godley early in 1916.

⁶ See Vol. V, pp. 25-32.

the social division of their nation into upper, middle and lower classes. English officers were mainly drawn from the two former, and their troops accepted the principle that the general business of the great world was the affair of their superiors alone rather than of themselves; if action outside routine was called for, they looked to their officers to tell them what to do and how to do it. In Australia the distinction into social classes was so resented that it was difficult to get born Australians to serve as officers' batmen and grooms, who by the English tradition were servants. In the A.I.F. a large proportion of these posts were filled by immigrants from the Old Country, who had no such objection. Those Australians who did so serve regarded themselves as their officers' guardians or helpers: they would look after the boss in those matters in which he was deemed incapable of looking after himself. If warned for a riding expedition the groom might turn up often with barely presentable uniform or harness, but the horses would be in first rate fettle and, without any special order the groom would come provided with whatever seemed prudent for the expedition—food for the two mounts and himself, perhaps an entrenching tool, wire cutters, hammer and pegs for marking out ground (or whatever the day's job might be), and a number of suggestions, good or bad, as to how it should be done.

From early childhood the average Australian had regarded himself and every one around him as masters of their own lives—an outlook which brought him much closer to the Scots and Americans than to most of the English, though English immigrants to the Dominions quickly picked it up. He was accustomed to take decisions, and was always ready to run risks for an object in which he was interested—whether the saving of a mate, the securing of a souvenir, or an unlicensed trip to Paris (or, after the war, to Cologne). He was less affected than most men by risk of punishment, but was bound to his fellows, and to the Old Country and the Allies, by a tense bond of democratic loyalty—a man must "stand by his mates" at all costs; and as he knew only one social horizon, that of race, most of his officers came within that category. He was the easiest man in the world to interest and lead, but was intolerant of incompetent or uninteresting leaders.

The world's business was the average "Digger's" business; and it is true that this did invest the war with one powerful attraction for him. Perhaps to no other soldier, except his cousins from the Dominions and the Americans, was it so interesting an adventure. If there was an aerodrome within reach of their billets, Australians would be found there all day, questioning the mechanics as they overhauled the machines, gaining what knowledge they could of the latest devices and of the adventures of the pilots. If there were tanks in the neighbourhood, these would act as magnets for any Australians bivouacked near by. Whereas the English soldier, accustomed to leave external affairs to his officers, was constantly oblivious of what was happening half a mile away—English writers spoke with fondness and almost pride of his inability to point an inquirer to places, units, or persons in the neighbourhood—the man in the Australian felt hat could usually give some helpful direction; and he would often add a word of advice—as that "You'd better not catch the old bloke before breakfast," or "If you take your car beyond the corner, look out for the b—— Fritz rubber gun"⁷—warnings which, whether asked or unasked, were generally worth heeding.

Not that the "Digger" was any less sick of the war than his British or French comrades. Except for a few demonic spirits one immersion in a great battle more than satisfied the eagerness that had led many to enlist, and left in almost all minds an often subconscious but never-absent dread. Most Australians yearned for return to their country with an intensity of longing of which they had not believed themselves capable, but which was remarked by most other soldiers who met them; so much so, that their word-pictures of their dry, sunlit, war-free land, freely sketched by them to their British friends amid the smoke and *vin rouge* of the *estaminets*, or to their girl admirers on English leave, not infrequently determined their hearers to seek homes there after the war. Yet they knew what their job was—to teach the rulers of Germany that warlike methods did not pay; and whenever talk of peace crept into the newspapers there was only one opinion in most of their trenches: "No use going home with the job unfinished, to be done again in ten

⁷ Long-range gun.

or twenty years' time by our children." Possible defeat did not enter their heads.

Unfortunately though cinema films of battles and trenches were constantly made, the daily life of these men in their billets and bivouacs behind the front was not at the time recognised as being of sufficient interest to be fully recorded by this means.⁸ In any case, as the talking film had not then been invented, such a record must have been inadequate. The diary of one of the official war correspondents, however, contains a curiously photographic sketch of a company in billets, made in this very month of May 1918 at the suggestion of one of the "Diggers" themselves—a brilliant and distinguished barrister, E. M. Brissenden⁹ (the same who, when the military authorities brought him a message from Sydney suggesting his return to Australia to fill a vacant judgeship, replied "Not on your life—I've just been made a second lieutenant in the A.I.F.!"). Brissenden's own service in it, enlisted as a private and thoroughly one with his mates, was typical, although there were few men of his brilliance in the force. It was a fair cross-section of the Australian people, the nation's women being well represented, at least in quality, by the nurses.

The notes made at Brissenden's suggestion record a couple of days in the life of a company of infantry at its billet in the area of a reserve brigade, close behind the Somme front. The Australian war correspondents, with a photographer (Capt. Hubert Wilkins) and an artist (Lieut. Will Dyson),¹⁰ happened to be lodged in the same billet, and one of them noted down what he saw and heard from the upper windows of the farmhouse, looking down at times on the inner courtyard and at other times on the streamside meadow and trees in front of the house.

"This last week" (say the notes), "living in the brewery at Querrieu, which is really a farm, we have had a company of

⁸ The responsibility for this lay with the chief Australian Official War Correspondent.

⁹ Afterwards Lt.-Col. E. M. Brissenden, M.B.E. Claims Officer, 3rd Aust. Div., 1916-19. Barrister-at-law; of Sydney; b. Brisbane, 21 Nov. 1862. Died 31 Oct. 1930.

¹⁰ Lt. W. H. Dyson. Official Artist with A.I.F. on Western Front 1916-19; of Melbourne and London; b. Ballarat, Vic., 23 Sep. 1880. Died 21 Jan. 1938.



1. IN THE LOFT AT THE BREWERY FARM, QUERRIEU

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E2168.
Taken on 11th May, 1918.*

To face p. 8.

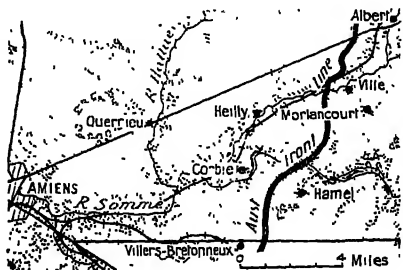


2. BREWERY FARM, Q'ERRIEC

Horses being watered in the Hallue River in front of the farm.

*Just. War Memorial Official Photo No. E4884.
Taken on 17th May, 1918.*

the 21st Battalion camped in the outhouses and barns around the yard. They mostly sleep in the big lofts around the yard. There are ladders up to the loft windows. There are also two or three barn rooms on the ground floor beneath the lofts—I don't know why there are so many barns. In the middle of the yard is a sort of pit full of straw, with an old low brick wall on our side of it—perhaps 18 inches high. A middle-sized tree grows by the corner of the pit, and another close outside this window where I write. There is a small stack of beech faggots by the straw pit, under the tree; and another tall one against the white-washed wall of the courtyard, opposite to me. In that wall is a big, square, dark



opening into what must have been a room for the farm waggons. One of the big grated doors is off its hinges leaning against the faggot heap. The other is sagging drunkenly on its hinges. On the floor there is straw. Someone has rigged a table there out of some boards—back where the daylight fades into the deep rich shade. Around this there must be seats—boxes probably—for men sit there all day long. The seat with its back to the doorway is a small beer barrel. The opening has the appearance of a stage and the group there playing cards is a stage scene or a picture of Rembrandt's—strong faces, loose brown khaki clothes, dashing old hats, strong sun-browned faces intent on the game; easy, strong virile attitudes of half a dozen players and onlookers.

"The first people moving every morning are the cooks. I don't know at what hour—but before the sunlight comes—there is the sound of chopping of wood in the yard and I see them in the grey light busy around their cooker. The yard pump in the corner starts squeaking and groaning—they are filling the water into the dixies for tea. A few early figures climb out of the lofts by the ladders and move across the yard in shirt and trousers, with towels round their necks, to the cold

little stream of the Hallue which runs brimming and yellow with recent rains through the flat unfenced meadows and stumpy willow trees in front of the house.

"About an hour later the cooks' work is finished. The mess orderlies of the four platoons lift the dixies off the cooker and put them down in various corners of the yard. An orderly shouts: 'Here y'are—No. 3—Breakfast No. 3.' Another is calling 'Breakfast No. 4.' No. 2 calls out for his platoon half a minute later. The farmyard has begun to swarm. Men are climbing backwards down all the ladders around the yard like bees crawling out of a hive—moving like ants about the yard and forming in little swarms around the dixies. Most men carry a mess tin and a pannikin—or a mess tin and the mess-tin lid, which is itself a shallow dish. The mess orderly kneeling by the big dixie with a ladle dishes out the breakfast: biscuit porridge into the mess-tin lid; tea into the mess tin. The bees move back to their lofts or to the barns on the ground floor; the stage room becomes a theatre scene with seven soldiers in picturesque attitudes seated round it talking while they feed. One man reclines on the three steps in front of the house door—a second man on the other side of it—like the figures on the Parthenon pediment or the supporters of a coat of arms; they put their mess tins on the steps, and reclining on their elbows take their breakfast regally. Others sit on the wall beside the straw pit. This morning, as there was also bacon for breakfast, each man brought a piece of paper on to which the orderly laid the bacon—one in twenty brought a plate. Their bread they already have, issued when I do not know.

"After the groups around the dixies have melted, a mess orderly calls out: 'Any more No. 4 platoon? Any one in No. 4 not had his bacon?' 'Here's some more bacon No. 4,' he says. One or two come up and carry back a slice. The orderly leaves the dixie. Any one who hasn't had his bacon by then must help himself. Two or three pieces of bacon lie in the dixie still. Occasionally a man passing with his mess tin of tea hooks a slice with the wooden skewer in the dixie. One slice lies there still. Several men come up, turn it over, and leave it—and there it remains—evidently not a choice bit.

"You hear a man ask, 'What time's parade?' 'Nine o'clock,' says another. Breakfast being about 7.30 or a quarter to eight,

there is a short interval. Some sit round the yard, or on the foot of the ladder—some are cleaning their rifles. You hear the locks clicking and rattling. I daresay others are cleaning their boots and kit in the lofts. During this interval a voice—a corporal's, I suppose—says: 'Turn out the sickers.' A few men, three or four, some looking really worn, and mostly seedy, move across the yard and disappear—I suppose they go to sick parade at the medical officer's, at another farmhouse in the village, probably at the battalion headquarters.

"There is always a crossfire of chaff when the yard is full. One Digger, with a face like a rusty mess tin—grim, black, bony, humorous—is perpetually chaffing the cooks. He has a voice like a file and you can hear it all hours of the day, when he is in, rasping out oaths and good-natured sarcasm. The cooks are fidgeting around their cooker, one in guernsey, another in singlet, and trousers—each in his hat and smoking all the while either a pipe or a cigarette. They take the chaff as a duck is supposed to take rain—let it run off their backs while the good-humoured creases round their eyes never alter.

"The barber has begun his work just in front of the stage opening—he has a chair and a towel—and I expect he was a skilled barber in private life. He too is smoking a pipe, and talking socialism.

"‘I expect a man 'd bloody well come again if he was over there to-day,’ he says.

"‘Knowing what I know now, I wouldn't,’ says the patient (who would probably enlist within 12 hours of the outbreak of this or any other war).

"Men begin to climb again down the ladders from the bee-lofts with belts and straps on and their ammunition pouches on their chests. An occasional one has the little extra pouch (the top of the entrenching tool is carried in it) hanging down behind. They have their felt hats and rifles and they stroll out of the big yard gate into the road in front of this house (beyond the road runs the stream of the Hallue with a sloped bank to the left of us where the horses are watered).

"A sergeant is shouting across the yard: 'Hurry up No. 3—hurry up No. 3 Platoon.' (It is often 'Shake a leg!' in the morning.) Outside in the road the men are falling-in in two lines. The N.C.O's are calling the roll of each platoon.

'Private Smith.' 'Here.' 'Private Hoolan.' 'Here.' 'Private Rogers'—no answer. 'Having his hair cut,' says a voice—apparently this is answer enough. And so on.

"The sergeants call the platoons to attention, stand them at ease—every order in a strong confident voice—call them to attention again—make them number—stand them at ease. An N.C.O.—I suppose he is the company sergeant-major—from the extreme right of the company calls it to attention again, the whole company this time. There have been four young officers talking to the C.S.M. for some minutes. They are standing in front of the company now, facing it. The sergeant in front of each platoon hands over his platoon to one of them by calling it to attention, going up to the officer and saluting. The C.S.M. takes the whole company, dresses it (the sergeant of the right platoon does the dressing—'up a little'—'back in the centre'—'A Company eyes front!'). The platoons had been inspected; the senior officer (Lieut. Bennie,¹¹ a pleasant, dark, chubby youngster) takes charge, stands them at ease, calls them to attention, moves them two paces forward to allow another company to march past them on the way to its practice ground, stands them at ease again. 'Stand easy.'

"For three minutes they stand with their sergeants and officers in front of them, talking—watching the battalion transport watering and washing their horses in one process by marching them splashing down the stream. (One graceful boy, bare to the waist, leans back on the horse that he rides and watches his led horse drink. 'Did you ever see anything more beautiful,' says Will Dyson, making a hasty sketch.) The Australian drivers take their horses 50 or 60 yards down the stream past a couple of holes where every second horse stumbles—if any driver didn't want to take his horse down there the chaff would drive him into doing so—they come out with the horses' dark hocks and hoofs shining and the drivers' boots and leggings wet half-way up the shin. There is a ripple and a laugh all along the line of the waiting company as a mule of the ammunition column breaks away from its fellow mule and driver (their bridles are generally chained together by a yard of chain to prevent this) and tries to get out up the bank. You can see the sergeants talking to the men behind them as they watch this,

¹¹ Lt. S. J. Bennie, 21st Bn. Engine-driver; of Lauriston, Vic.; b. Lauriston, 12 Oct. 1891. Killed in action, 5 Oct. 1918.

and the Tommies of some British battalion drilling through the trees across the river.

"The senior subaltern calls the company to attention and the O.C. of the company (Lieut. Sullivan)¹² comes up from his billet. The subaltern salutes and hands over the parade to him. The O.C. talks to the subaltern and the C.S.M. for some minutes, over certain papers.

"Then, in a big confident voice, some one of his officers—perhaps the orderly officer of the day—reads the orders of the day to them. The O.C. has a word to say about the morning's work—some special exercise in outpost work. Then he shouts at them half a dozen brisk commands. Every command the O.C. gives is jerked out, with his head over his right shoulder as he looks down the line, his hands tighten and his shoulders brace as he rips out each syllable:

"'A Company will move to the right in column of route.' 'Form column of route.' 'Right.' The officers and sergeants move round to the head of their platoons and A Company moves off to its morning's work amongst the wandering courses of the Hallue River between the willow trees on the flats.

"They come back 2½ hours later—climb up to their lofts with their kit—sling it off their shoulders, climb down from the beehives with their mess tins (for the midday meal).

"There is an interval of ease—the walls of the buildings around the yard are lined with men leaning their backs against them. A 'two-up' school has started in a corner (pay-day was four days ago and the stakes are getting low). It gradually attracts a dozen men including the man who never has any money—the Irishman, the hard case of the battalion—who is always broke.

"A second parade—very much like the first—breaks into this—the sergeants from the yard call their platoons out: 'Right-o Number 4!' Out come the bees, off across the yard; parade in the road; out across the meadows.

"They come back at four. Tea is at five. Work for the day is done except for the staff—the Q.M. and sergeants no doubt have further work to worry them. But the men are at their ease from now on. They have had their day's bread issued at 4 p.m.—the waggon came right into the yard (the drivers

¹² Capt. J. Sullivan, M.C., M.M.; 21st Bn. Law clerk; of Geelong, Vic.; b. East Geelong, 30 July 1895. Killed in action, 5 Oct. 1918.

were just as regular on the battlefield). A good many eat the whole bread issue that night, so the Q.M. says. The Q.M. issues it—and jam—also $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. cake of chocolate to each man and a packet of biscuits bought out of the regimental share in canteen profits (we saw the biscuits being brought round to the billet in a blanket by two men).

"The regimental band came yesterday to play on the green back-orchard of a billet at the corner, for A Company's benefit. Gradually about thirty or forty men collected around it—sitting on the grass against the wall—or under the trees. The little band corporal was throwing his whole heart into his conducting—straightening himself and his head up tensely with each bar or phrase and working his forearm with wrist bent and fingers pursed like those of a girl in a fashion plate. One of the 'Diggers' in the porch strolled across the road hatless with a mess tin in his hand, saying (generally—to the horizon as it were): 'That's what I like—a band on a fine day. I'm going over to hear the band.' And over he went, by himself, and leant against an apple tree on the grass—and listened to the band.

"An old French miller or baker or some relic of the population of the place came out from one of the outhouses to which the orchard belonged in his shirt sleeves, his head as bald as Father Abraham's and the seat of his baggy trousers sagging half-way down to his knees—and started to argue with an Australian driver who was letting two horses feed (while he held their reins) on the long grass of the orchard. Old Abraham quivered with the rage of his argument, shook his fist in the Australian's face, gesticulated with long skinny quivering fingers—the Australian looked at him in a stolid, interested way, and made absolutely no change in his attitude or his occupation. The old miller went away, hopping excitedly over the low wet patches on the grass and fetched a long stick like a whip handle and came back with it and stood making passes with it, as if to frighten the horses—and at last went away shaking his fist, the Australian never once having moved anything except his head, or shifted his weight from one foot to the other.

"That proved an interlude to the band, attracting the lazy interest of most of the men who were watching. The old man disappeared and the pair of horses went on feeding.

"The band was the one official amusement which the company had—the whole effort of the world of culture on their

behalf. For the rest they found their own amusement, mostly in the yard or in the side street just beside it.

"The yard is the small world in which A Company lives and moves. What strikes you at once is that it is a world of strong, independent, determined individuals in which any one who was not downright and decided would always be left and go short of anything that he wanted. You hear no half statements in that yard; you never hear 'I think perhaps,' 'it might be,' 'possibly'—you never hear any sort of qualification. Every statement is downright, unhesitating, ripped out without the slightest doubt. If a man wants to deny a statement he simply says 'No' or 'No, he did not.' The sergeants who move there are every one of them strong men who give whatever orders are given in the yard with a downright voice which admits no hesitancy. The officers move in that crowd with absolute confidence whenever they come into the yard to the little company orderly room with the news or the orders posted up outside of it. A weak man, or an undetermined man, would stand no chance at all of having authority in that crowd. The officers are the sergeants of last year, and the sergeants are officers in embryo; and the corporals are budding sergeants—men who naturally move with a little more authority among these strong men than the others do.

"'Two-up' is the universal pastime of the men. This is not a case of a few sharpers, a close set who start a 'school.' A few devotees, as soon as time hangs, get together in the yard or the side street and ask if any one wants to 'give it a go.' Someone flings three pennies once or twice—a ringkeeper is chosen; and then 'two-up' starts. Pat ———, the Irishman with face like a mess tin and voice like a file, saunters up, in his grey shirt, bare brown forearms stuck into his breeches, looks over the group, saunters round in a half-circle, and squats on the lowest rung of one of the ladders near by. Every now and then he makes a tour to look on—he never has any money—and settles down on the ladder again. 'Lend us a franc, Jim,' he says in chaff to a friend who is climbing the ladder to the beehive. 'No bloody fear, I won't,' says Jim.

"'Ah, yer mean bastard,' says the Irishman, smiling.

"'Didn't I settle up for yer at Tel el Kebir?' says Jim.

"Over the chink of pennies on the stones there comes a continual jargon from the ring:

"'A couple on the head.'

"'Three heads—Franc a head—There's another on the head!'

"'Finally: 'Any on the side?'

"'Heads ten—Heads forty—Forty on the nut.'

"'We want forty. We want thirty-five. We want twenty-five—Twenty-five on the nut—Fifteen on the nut—Look 'ere -- Give 'em a go!'

"The game, which had gone on for an hour, was flagging. It is a game which (for want of any other) starts in any quarter of an hour's interval or lasts a whole afternoon. The side road outside becomes every evening a perfect country fair with groups playing these games in it—a big crowd of seventy or eighty at the bottom of the street, in the middle of the road; a smaller crowd, or perhaps twenty, on a doorstep further up; and either one or two smaller groups playing crown and anchor on a doorstep higher still. We have to drive the car through them every afternoon we go out—they are quite good natured—and there are always notes, probably 5 franc notes, on the ground, picked up hastily to let the car pass.

"The game is nominally illegal, I think; but at any rate in this company they wink at it. The O.C. told me that he lets the men get all the drink they want on a period like this out of the line; and I daresay he looks on 'two-up' the same way.

"The language in the yard is such that you 'ld think there was going to be a knifing every two minutes. 'Ah ———— you, you lazy bastard.' 'Go to b———, to hell wid yer.' 'Would yer, yer bastard!'—and you look out of the window and find that it is all spoken with a grin. The most ferocious oaths are flung between passing men and the utmost effect is that they grab one another in play, or make half a dozen passes and digs (in perfect bayonet style) with their bayonet-less rifles. There is so much real fighting in this life now, that there is next to no fighting among the men—at any rate not in this infantry (and Gullett¹³ says the same of the artillery). Dyson tells me there was one fight down the road the other day. I

¹³ Capt. Hon. Sir Henry Gullett, K.C.M.G., who enlisted in the ranks of the artillery, and eventually served as Aust. Official War Correspondent in Egypt and Palestine, 1918; Minister for Trade and Customs, 1928-29, 1932-33, for Trade Treaties, 1934-37, for External Affairs, 1939-40, for Information, 1939-40. Journalist; of Sydney; b. Harston, Vic., 26 March 1878. Killed in aeroplane crash, 13 Aug. 1940.

have not even heard a quarrel—or a grumble that I can remember.

"Here are fragments of the conversation as I have noted them:

"'Four days!' (obviously a reference to Paris leave). 'What do you want to take four days for—when I go I take fourteen.'

"'Where's Dick?' 'Hullo.' 'Will you 'ave a game of poker?' 'No.'

"'A draft has just arrived. 'They say they've got eight divisions,' says one of them—clearly some American met on the way over has said there were eight American divisions in France.

"Occasionally—only twice, I think—we heard a drunken man outside. One was a sergeant returning from the annual sergeants' dinner celebrating the sailing of the battalion. The other was a youngster with red hair who was shouting from the corner of the yard the worst language he could think of in a hoarse voice. I thought he must be going to fight—he said he'd 'fight 'em all—any one of yers'—but he had a smile most of the time, though he could scarcely stand; the others looked at him occasionally with a sort of good-humoured toleration—passed him with a smile—but otherwise took no notice. He managed to reel to a ladder leading into the beehive and climb up it. Another man was coming down. When they met, the drunk man told him to go up. The other told him to get to one side and then good-humouredly passed him on the ladder and let him go on climbing. I expected to see him break his neck—but he got into the loft quite safely.

"The long-range British gun behind the village goes off with a tremendous bang. From the yard; 'Oh Jesus! Cut it out!' Another: 'Here, I'm off.'

"On the morning of the day when they were to return to the front there was a change—steel helmets for parade. There was a great rolling of one blanket in the waterproof sheet. (During parade a party from each platoon was sent back to carry its packs up to the waggon lines—each man carried 4 packs.) They had been sewing sandbags on their own tin hats for some days in corners of the yard.¹⁴ Their cooker (very

¹⁴ These neatly made covers prevented the helmets from shining in the light of flares.

clean) left for somewhere; and the cooker and cooks of the relieving battalion—very dirty from behind the line—came in. The new cooks were strangers amongst them.

"A sergeant shouts: 'Steel helmets to be worn on parade.' Another sergeant: 'Steel helmets, No. 2. Hats in the pack.'

" 'Bon.'¹⁵

" 'Markers, A Company!'

" 'D'you want a good marker, Steve?' (with a grin).

"When they are lined outside, a sergeant: 'Cigarettes out!' Each platoon sergeant calls the roll from his little notebook. The sergeants are dressed like the men but without rifles. This time there are only two officers present on parade; they are not yet drilling the men—all this is done by the sergeants. One officer has a Sam Browne, the other (Gawler)¹⁶ a web belt. They march off the company just as the 'captain' arrives.

"The morning parade is on the marshes. There is a long rest—dinner is at the billet. The battalion is going off at 4— they move into support to-night and iron rations will be handed out up there. Bombs (2 per man) and ammunition are issued in the yard during the rest after dinner. Paper is picked up by the sanitary man. Then, at 3.30, the company sergeant-major says: 'Dress for parade, A Company.' 'What's that? I dress for parade?' 'Yes, Pat.' And so—another parade and off they go! About 8 the other battalion comes in."¹⁷

Before following our company on its way to the front

¹⁵ The Australian had a few tags of soldier-French picked up from the villagers when the time and conditions were suitable: "Très bon," "No bon," "San fairy ann (*ça ne fait rien*)," "Beaucoup oofs (*œufs*), Madame," "Fromach (*fromage*)," "Vin blanc," "Vin rouge," "Café cognac," "Après la guerre," "Aller promener," with occasionally such *tours de force* as "Parti pour les tranchées," and "Sacrés Boches," or "Australiens beaucoup brigands" were the small coin of this intercourse. Although nothing said aloud in the yard suggested it, elsewhere there may have been some hunting of "skirts" even at that time in Querrieu, but the men were intensely absorbed in the life of their unit, its work and games, like the boys at a great public school. In the life of Australian soldiers sex played its natural part— which, considering their virility and consequent freedom from fear and hesitation, was less prominent than some war fiction would suggest. Doubtless in the beehive loft or at the stage-set card table adventures in sex came in their turn into the talk; it is equally certain that, to most outsiders who mingled with the troops in these short rests, the surprise was not the constancy with which this happened, but the degree to which it did not.

¹⁶ Lt. F. Gawler, M.C.; 21st Bn. Commercial traveller; of Burnley, Vic.; b. Burnley, 14 June 1892.

¹⁷ The diary states that the company which now came in to the Brewery Farm was a less happy one; the men, it says, were Queenslanders, quiet and self-respecting, but—in this company at this period—they seemed too good for some of their N.C.O's, for whom their respect could hardly fail to be affected by the drunken shouts—and sometimes figures—that from time to time were ejected from the sergeants' mess in the corner of the yard.

line, a few notes must here be interpolated as to the officers who trained their men in these rest-periods, and as to the system of schools that amplified the training and instructed the instructors.

The Australian officer

As above explained the relations between dominion officers—particularly Australians—and their men were differently based from those that in 1914-18 were still traditional in the British Army, and there are grounds for believing that the post-war tendency of British military discipline to approach the dominion systems though brought about partly by democratisation consequent on war conditions was also partly due to recognition of the efficacy of "colonial" methods in 1917-18. At that time except for members of the small regular military staff in Australia (including lads trained as cadets at the military college at Duntroon) there was now only one gate for entry to the A.I.F., that of enlistment as private in Australia.¹⁸ When recruits went into camp there a small proportion was selected and sent to officers' schools; this source provided a number of junior officers who, generally in the proportion of one to seventy-five men, were sent overseas in charge of reinforcement drafts. All other officers—by then probably a large majority of the whole number—were picked by their unit commanders at the front from among their men. These, when their units were not engaged in fighting, and time allowed, were now generally sent as cadets to officers' training schools, chiefly at Cambridge or Oxford. But in the infantry the gaps made by each battle had to be quickly filled, and many new officers were promoted on the spot, sometimes (as at Pozières) in batches of eight or nine in a single battalion; this method was quite as satisfactory, and the visit to a cadet school was awarded rather as a holiday than as a necessity. It is true that as the infantry was "picked over" again and again for this purpose, suitable men were becoming rarer, and battalion commanders did not always approve¹⁹ of the candidates put forward by the company commanders, considering one here or there too rough or uneducated or unlikely to be able to shoulder responsibility or maintain morale. Some

¹⁸ Those who had been officers, in the militia or cadets, before 1 Jan. 1915 might also be given direct appointments, though even these had to attend schools before being commissioned in the A.I.F.; but such entries had practically ceased. The whole subject is discussed in *Vol. III* (pp. 53-4, 59).

¹⁹ The lists had to be approved by the brigadiers, but this approval was practically always given, and the promotion was then made automatically by General Birdwood under his powers as G.O.C., A.I.F.

colonels undoubtedly placed too much importance on externals, others perhaps too little, but these promotions were the chief means by which they so quickly stamped their personality, for good or ill, on their units.

For, flatly contrary to the principle adopted in the British Army, in the A.I.F. a man receiving a commission almost invariably became an officer in his old unit. His company and unit commanders had chosen him as known and trusted, and all concerned were chagrined if he were removed to another brigade, though his transfer to a battalion of the same brigade in need of good officers might be condoned. On the contrary, in the British Army, although there were many striking exceptions to the rule, the general policy was against the appointment of a man from the ranks as an officer in his old unit; under the system then prevailing there, the social gulf between the middle and lower classes, already referred to, still afforded an easy, ready-established means of securing for the officer the deference of his men, necessary for military command. But among Australian men social distinctions were practically unrecognised; indeed, to many of the finest Australian officers it was a new and distasteful experience to be plunged (as occasionally happened during their war service) into English circles where, though they themselves were often received with great kindness, people of the circles from which they had enlisted were obviously held to be outside the social pale. The barrier placed, sometimes officially, on the admission of ordinary soldiers to hotels and restaurants where officers were dining was resented in all dominion forces, by officers as well as men, and its abolition in recent years was welcomed overseas. Few Australian commanders in 1918 paid any regard to the social status of the men whom they selected to be officers. Manners sometimes, and education often, might influence the choice; but it mattered not whether a man was a labourer or barrister, tradesman or clerk, mechanic or farmer, engine-driver or policeman, baker or stockbroker—the average battalion commander now had his eye only on those qualities that fitted him for leadership—intelligence, courage, reliability, and strength of will; and knowing that he was selecting his own officers he was all the more careful about the choice.

The result was the emergence of an exceptionally capable and determined body of young men—often very raw material

for moulding in the great traditions of responsibility, *noblesse oblige*, and self-sacrifice of the old British officer corps. But the very freshness of their outlook caused them to be impressed the more deeply by those traditions—they did not talk about them but they accepted them with fiery earnestness. Some separation from their old comrades was necessary when they were promoted. Usually the "newly-weds," as they were sometimes called, held a last—and needless to say genial—dinner with their old mates, and thenceforward their intimate familiarity ceased; their subsequent relations were more formal; they might dine together, if meeting when on leave, but they would not drink together—their relationship involved no more caste distinction than would exist between a British admiral and his sub-lieutenants.

A beneficial result of the whole system was that the Australian officer was much closer to his men than was his British colleague; it is true that this made command more difficult for him, forcing him to rely upon his personality for success in control, but it brought many and great advantages. Whereas, for example, in the British Army it was accepted as a healthy—indeed almost essential—condition that, even at the front, officers' messes should be maintained with at least some faint reflection of the style to which the officer class in England was accustomed,²⁰ and in the trenches, where possible the officers of each company often messed together, Australian tradition forbade the regimental officer's enjoying food or drink different from that of his men, or being away from them in the line even at meal-times, especially if they were under fire.

Journey's End (writes Capt. G. D. Mitchell),²¹ with its five company officers sitting together in a front-line dugout, could never have been written of an Australian company. Rather would you have seen each platoon officer glumly feeding from his mess tin among his men, the company commander sitting in solitary glory. I have often had my rum issue swiped by some dissolute private when my back was turned. And cigarettes—blazes! While I had one left, the platoon considered they had an option on it.

One result of this system was a particularly impelling desire on the part of officer and man each to justify himself in the

²⁰ Contrary to repute, however, the messing at Haig's G.I.I.Q. was mostly very simple. At least one Australian artillery I.I.Q. mess was far more regal.

²¹ *Backs to the Wall*, p. 122.

other's eyes. Men newly given their commissions, especially, went into battle with the feeling that their former comrades were watching them, and the proportion of second-lieutenants who were killed in their first fight after promotion was so high as to give rise to the proverb, "One star, one stunt."

Each officer had to be largely a schoolmaster and administrator, as well as a leader in fighting, since the training of the A.I.F., like that of all other forces on the Western Front, was mainly carried through by its officers in periods of rest such as the one into which this chapter has taken a glimpse. Company officers as well as their seniors had to draw up curriculums for morning and afternoon training, including lectures to their men,²² and these courses, divided into short periods with breaks between, had to be approved by higher authority. The specialist officers and N.C.O's taught their own subjects—Lewis gun, bombing, signalling, scouting, and so forth—these specialists being themselves trained in the great system of G.H.Q., army, corps, divisional, and brigade schools that operated all the time, though in the supreme emergency of the German spring offensive many schools were converted into fighting units and rushed to sectors where a break-through was threatening.

The importance of the school system may be gauged from the fact that during this May, while their units were actively engaged in the line, some 2,500 Australian **Schools** officers and men in France were at army, corps, or divisional schools²³—not including the brigade schools where

²² Visiting specialists, generally from within the corps, would give some of these, the company commanders others. For example, in one week's course, lectures to companies on "action of men if taken prisoners," "function of infantry in supply of intelligence," "orders as to treatment of enemy captured," were given by an intelligence officer; for "the platoon as a complete fighting unit," "duties of sentries on post in the line," and "discussion of platoon tactics when attacking a strong-post," other officers were responsible; while the company commanders themselves lectured on "elementary principles of defence in depth, cover, reserves, and flank protection," and "the value of salvage to the Government and to Australia." Time was given to training spare crews for the Lewis guns, and to instructing the troops how to fire the German machine-gun. Platoon schemes of training had to be submitted to battalion headquarters the day before they were practised. The stretcher-bearers, observers, and signallers were trained separately by the medical, scout and signalling officers.

²³ In July 1918 the schools chiefly attended dealt with the following subjects: *kaison* between infantry, artillery, and air force; infantry training; intelligence; duties of commanding officers; duties of company commanders; artillery; machine-guns; work of engineers and pioneers; Lewis gunnery; bombing; signalling; wireless power-buzzer; sniping, observing, and scouting; Stokes mortars; heavy and medium trench-mortars; musketry, physical training and bayonet fighting; gas; and cookery.

some of the most effective work was done.²⁴ The consistent success of Australians in the army schools was phenomenal—indeed it furnishes a problem to which their keen ambition and interest in their tasks gives, probably, only a partial clue. It was normal for the whole of each small quota of Australian entrants to secure good passes, and common for two or three of them to share with as many from other forces the top places on the list. The same result had been noted in Egypt; and at the naval schools, which a few young Australians from the fleet shortly afterwards attended, it was equally marked.²⁵

In the past, although a course at the military schools in France had always been looked on as a rest from front-line work, the Australian schools had not always been situated in agreeable surroundings. For example, the old I Anzac Corps school at Aveluy on the old Somme battlefield, though well placed for tactical exercises, stood on the bleak moorland of that devastated area. But in this spring, and even more in the summer, some of the Australian schools in the woods behind the comparatively intact front were surrounded by a loveliness of natural beauty that impressed even the most hard-grained.²⁶ Many were close enough to the Somme to allow of bathing, and indeed the attitude of the authorities toward recreation changed as this summer went on. At least in the case of the Australians, who had been almost constantly in the line since the end of March,²⁷ it was realised that measures were necessary to counteract the staleness induced by constant strain, and,

²⁴ At this stage the "nucleus" (of about one man in five) that was left in camp by each battalion of an infantry brigade when the brigade went into the line, was organised as a battalion, for training or—in emergency—fighting purposes. Br.-Gen. Paton of the 6th Bde. organised his nucleus as the brigade school, with classes in Lewis gunnery, use of rifle-grenades and bombs, gas and gas-precautions, signalling, musketry, physical training, and the use of German machine-guns. Privates were to go there for 9-16 days, officers and N.C.O.'s for 36 days, and every one was to take with him a direction from his commanding officer as to what training he most needed.

²⁵ Of the first batch to go to Whale Island or Greenwich, three—W. L. Reilly, J. A. Collins, and J. C. D. Esdaile—took the first three places in a group of 75 in gunnery, and two—F. E. Getting and J. A. Collins—the first two places in a class of 46 in torpedo work. The fourth batch won two first places and three seconds in similar exams; the fifth, three firsts, two seconds, and three thirds. For results in Egypt, see *Vol. III, footnote on page 20*. Curiously enough similar results had been noted in the dental school at the University of Pennsylvania ten years before the Great War. (J. A. Collins, mentioned above, was captain of the second *Sydney* when in 1940 she sank the Italian cruiser *Bartolomeo Colleoni*.)

²⁶ Such a school is shown in *Vol. XII (plate 482)*, the 8th Bde.'s school at Allonville. The corps school at Aveluy in 1917 is shown in *plates 437-8*.

²⁷ From May onwards the Australian Corps held its line with three divisions, the fourth enjoying a fortnight in reserve and then taking the place of one of the others. This ensured a fortnight's rest every two months. In addition, as each division held its line with two brigades, each brigade would be out of the line for a fortnight of the six weeks that its division spent at the front.

in June and July, those battalions that were temporarily in the rest or reserve areas devoted the mornings to military training and the afternoons to what was now known as "recreational training"—in other words to cricket, organised by the companies in such a way as to ensure that every one played, followed, where possible, by bathing in the Somme. The old physical training of the nature of Swedish drill, in which the men took only a listless interest, to a great extent disappeared.²⁸

The march of our company from the Brewery Farm on that spring evening brought it to Ribemont, in a forward area vastly different from those to which in the last three years it had grown accustomed. Only its veterans could recall the crowded rabbit warren of Anzac. But perhaps half its men could remember the trench-lines of 1916 at Armentières, revetted, duckboarded, garrisoned in every bay; with networks of support trenches and connecting saps in which they had lived as in the streets of a city; of which the elaborately constructed machine-gun and trench-mortar positions, headquarters, observation and sniping posts, and dumps were the industrial establishments, and the nightly fatigue parties, dodging the light of flares and the stream of machine-gun bullets along the trench tramways, were the transport. Many more—all indeed but the newest recruits—had grown accustomed to the vast morasses of the 1916-17 battlefields, where shell-hole bordered shell-hole, passable only on duckboards precariously winding between their sodden rims.

The scene to which they now went was utterly different. True, when day arrived, they could see on the British side—though not, as previously, on the German—the white or brown molehills of a great trench-system already seaming the heights, where line upon line had recently been dug to bar any farther advance by the enemy. But these lines sprawled over otherwise intact country, through open, green fields of springing wheat

²⁸ This was also the case at the command depots in England where physical training was vital for convalescents and men being "hardened" for transfer to the front. Col. D. M. McWhae, the principal medical officer, reported: "In May 1918 a new system was introduced, in which games were made the basis of (physical) training. . . . The new method was much more interesting . . . and was a great advance on the old. It was found so useful that soldiers awaiting return to Australia were, if fit, also given organised games under physical training instructors, and this had a big effect on their mental and physical condition." (See Vol. II, *Official History of the Australian Army Medical Services*, pp. 465-6).

and around beautiful copses. Even the sentries in the front-line area, where shell-holes were becoming frequent, could hardly note the rare traces of destruction showing amid the short crops; and as for the tall, beautiful trees in the Somme and Ancre valleys and the copses on the heights, then all bursting into young green leaf—these filled a man with the vague longings of spring-time. He could almost fancy the cottage folks moving among the houses of Sailly-le-Sec, Corbie, Buire, Ribemont, and other small places, though their tiles were partly scattered and many walls holed. The scene was a world removed from the bare desert of vanished Pozières, and the morasses of Flers and Zonnebeke.

German gas-shelling, resulting in heavy losses, had made most villages near the front unsafe shelter for troops, but part of the 21st Battalion, now reserve of the brigade astride of the Ancre, went into cellars in Ribemont, and our company from the Brewery, turning off across the fields, took over a bank on the terraced hillsides. The company of the 3rd Division which had previously bivouacked there, vanished into the night and the Brewery men settled down under their waterproof sheets in the abandoned niches. In none of their previous campaigns had a tour in the support line been so pleasant. Even in May there was still here or there a cow or goat to be found in the forward area,²⁹ still an occasional hare to be shot in the pastures, still a chance of discovering wine in other cellars besides those of that treasure island, Villers-Bretonneux.³⁰ There were fish in the streams, and a Mills bomb wisely expended might furnish an occasional breakfast. As the weather grew warmer there was river bathing for troops at rest. In March the German advance of twenty miles had dislocated the elaborate baths and laundry organisation of the Third and Fifth Armies, and the consequent increase of vermin might have brought serious ill-

²⁹ As late as the end of June Ptes. J. McLeay (Unley, S. Aust.), A. R. Wells (Terowie, S. Aust.), and other enterprising stretcher-bearers of the 13th Field Ambulance, stabled and milked a cow at Vaire, near Hamel on the Somme. In May a goat was kept and milked in a camouflaged trench in the 5th Bde.'s sector, opposite Morlancourt, and another at a company headquarters of the 6th Bde. near Ville.

³⁰ The history of the 24th Bn. (*The Red and White Diamond*, pp. 235-7) says that a cellar of red wine found in Méricourt-l'Abbé was issued in daily rations to the companies. A great deal of salvage was done voluntarily by this battalion at Millencourt during April for the French inhabitants, now refugees, who in previous years had been its friends. Many loads of furniture, potatoes, oats, and other salvage were saved under shell-fire and handed over to the French Mission for distribution among the refugees. A piano, the treasure of a family of girls who had left it in the village, was rescued for them by some of the bandsmen who under very great difficulties, hauled it out on a cart at night.

ness; but there were quantities of clean feminine underclothing in the abandoned villages, and men pestered with lice seized upon it. This practice, which meant the abandonment of useful military underclothing, had to be quickly stopped. In the sector to which the Brewery company afterwards went, at Méricourt-l'Abbé, military baths had been improvised by the staff of the 24th Battalion gathering tubs from the village and using the hot water service of the *château*. Regular baths were quickly reorganised at Heilly, and the shock of the authorities there on receiving, in return for washed and mended ordnance vests and underpants, a pile of lace-fringed lingerie³¹ is referred to in more than one record.

In the words of many "Diggers" it was now "a good war"; despite the rain that occasionally drenched their niches, and lay a foot or two deep in some of the newly dug trenches, the conditions were those of a picnic. Moreover, the Australian soldier was bursting with the satisfying knowledge that his efforts in the campaign were now telling. After years in which he and his mates had been called on to stake their lives in undertakings of which the advantages were, at least, difficult to understand, he now saw himself visibly doing the job for which he had come to France—holding and repelling the Germans in spite of continued attacks, while many of the French villagers, who had fled before the advancing enemy, now returned to their homes full of a flattering confidence that the man in the felt hat would give them absolute protection.³² Never had the methods of his employment seemed so reasonable.

And it is probably due to this that, beyond all expectation, despite the supposedly depressing effect of diminishing reinforcements and the consequently increased use of men who had been under the strain of war, the "Digger" began to show more than ever the quality that had marked him since the Landing at Anzac—an outstanding readiness to risk danger.

There exists no record enabling the reader to accompany the Brewery company into the front line, himself to take stock of its surroundings there—that genial brotherhood, with its young lawyer commander and young engine-driver second-in-

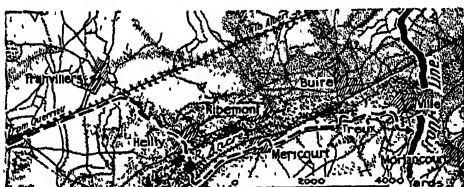
³¹ This was "worked" during the presence of a temporary substitute for the regular baths sergeant.

³² See Vol. V, pp. 120, 177.

command, here disappears under the weft of this history, though the reader will catch fleeting glimpses of it at intervals up to the last fight of Australian infantry in the war.³³ But the same writer followed to the front line a few days later (after the capture of Ville) a company of a sister battalion, the 22nd, which then held the front south-east of that village.³⁴ The 21st Battalion was then in support, scattered in new trench-lines south of Treux and in the old French line near Méricourt-l'Abbé.

But, whether working or sleeping in their scattered posts, its men were not seen by the diarist on his way up. Following the main road along the southern side of the Ancre valley from Heilly, four miles behind the line, through the abandoned Méricourt-l'Abbé (where stood a notice: "DANGER. This village has been filled up with German gas") the visitor indeed saw hardly any troops. In Méricourt were a few pioneers and tunnellers sinking deep dugouts in banks beside the road and river. Farther on, the little village of Treux was empty except for some machine-guns. After going half a mile along the road towards Ville, skirting the marshes on the left and a gentle hill on the right, "at last," he writes, "busy on some dugout where he lived, in the bank on the right, I saw a man. I asked him where company headquarters was. . . . He said they were in the village (Treux), away back. . . . The next officer ahead would be somewhere up in the trenches or roads on the right of Ville. He didn't know at all where the posts were on the left of it, in the marshes."

It was for these posts that the visitor was making; but as, in the trees and long grass of the marshes, it was easy for a wayfarer to wander by mistake into the German lines, or to be



Route from Querrieu to front line at Ville, end of May, 1918, is shown thus - - .

³³ In which, alas, its young commander, Lt. Sullivan, and the second-in-command, Lt. Bennie, and many others who lived in that farm and its beehive lofts, were killed.

³⁴ The rule of the Official War Correspondents was that, where an important fight took place, the actual ground should, if possible, be visited by them and the photographers either on the day of the action or as soon as possible after.

shot and not found till long afterwards, if at all, he decided to go first to the front line on the hill south of Ville where one of the company commanders at least might know the position of the posts on the flats. The solitary Digger pointed to a track across a rich field of mustard-coloured flowers, and the diarist, after crossing it for several hundred yards, reached a "good, deep" sunken road leading up the hillside to the south, with many traces of earlier shell-fire. Here were half a dozen signallers, who said that a trench higher up the road led to the support and front lines. "I found it, 150 yards farther up. Kybosh Lane was its name."³⁵ It passed out across a wheatfield. . . . One disappeared at once below the level of the green field and marched along between the brick-red earthen trench sides till suddenly they opened into a much deeper and longer sunken road. It was absolutely empty. High up on the farther bank of it was the continuation of my trench. Three men were standing in the beginning of the trench. . . . One told me there was a company headquarters in the front line. 'Keep pretty low when you get well along—you're under direct observation,' he said.

"There seemed to be no one else about—only those three. The big sunken road seemed awfully empty—nothing but abandoned German gear in it—helmets, overcoats, tin mugs lying in the 'pozzies' where the Germans had been shot or captured. In some of those 'pozzies' there still lay buried the Germans who had been shot there—the earth had been shovelled in on them as they lay."³⁶

"The trench presently began to descend a little on the farther side of the knuckle. In front, on the opposite side of the valley, about 500 or 800 yards away, one could see the bare earth streaks on the green hillside where the Germans were. They seemed often on top of the terraced banks. Presently my trench ended in another which ran at right angles across it—clearly the front line. I turned to the right.

"The front line was marked on a board, Kangaroo Trench. It was fairly deep at first, but quickly struck the chalk and be-

³⁵ At that time trench names began with the letter of the 6,000 yard map-square within which they were located. Soon afterwards the system was changed and trench names began with A, B, or C according as they were in the area of the right, central, or left divisions holding the corps front. Kybosh was then changed to Colac.

³⁶ The attack on Ville had caught them just after the arrival of their home mail, before some had time to open their letters.

came very shallow.³⁷ There was no trace of any one in it. I kept pretty low. Whenever I looked back—there was the hill above Dernancourt, with the white chalk trenches of our line wandering over the green face of the hill and the German trenches facing them. . . . Presently I met an Australian coming down the trench with a dozen letters and papers—evidently the incoming Australian mail—in his hand to deliver. The trench was too narrow for us to pass in shelter, but standing up we could do it. He didn't seem to worry about snipers, but sat on the back of the trench for half a minute or so while he was talking to me." This immunity was due to the 22nd's own snipers—they 'had hit, they thought, at least twenty men in the neighbourhood. 'The German isn't sniping,' said a young officer (quoted later in the diary), 'and we give him plenty of chances.'"

"About 300 yards up from Kybosh Lane the trench became deeper and one saw the ends of rifles in it, and, on coming round the corner, men sitting here and there along it—others lying asleep on the floor of the trench or in shelters covered by waterproof sheets. They told me that about 150 yards along I should find a company headquarters. I found it, in a little sap leading back off the front line. . . . The youngster there recognised me. I found him in his shelter, with his company sergeant-major sitting on the step of it. The C.S.M. was older than he, but was exactly like his second-in-command—took exactly the position of a junior officer, leading most of the conversation."

After inquiring the whereabouts of the line in the marshes, the diarist called in on the next post 300-400 yards down the trench. "We had been hearing every now and then the click as of a rifle trigger pulled when there is no cartridge in. Frenger,³⁸ the lieutenant in charge of the lower post, said: 'Did you hear that noise—that's one of the German trench-mortars. We captured it in the attack on Ville. The boys found any amount of ammunition for it in Ville, so they've been shooting it off at the Germans.' True enough—about fifteen seconds after the click there was an explosion over the top of the hill behind Morlancourt and a cloud of roan-coloured dust—they must

³⁷ The reader may picture it precisely as a new drain dug across a wheatfield. This trench was afterwards named Canberra Trench.

³⁸ Lt. F. S. Frenger, 22nd Bn. Civil servant; of California, U.S.A., and Sydney, N.S.W., b. Kentucky, U.S.A., 24 Aug. 1890.

have an extensive range. Then another click and presently an explosion quite near at hand on a piece of brick-red parapet in the green corn—one of the German front-line posts. 'If you go round there on your way back they'll send off two or three rounds for you. . . .'

"And there. . . . I found it—a German trench-mortar and one solitary private of the L.T.M. Battery firing it; and in the entrance of Kybosh Lane . . . the sergeant observing."

After a long walk around Ville to the Ancre flats, leaving the last "little lonely unit of machine-gunners . . . there in the marshes," the visitor made his way back along a deserted path bordering the Ancre. "Thinking it over," he wrote, "the puzzle is—where were the troops in this day's walk. There was practically no one, except the tunnellers digging in the roadside, from the time I left Heilly till I got to the front³⁰—and even there I had to worm along 300 yards before I came to a man. The company of the 22nd which held the front line was down to 80 men, and they said that their nearest support was 500 yards behind—and that was only 30 men strong.

"It practically means that you have to rely upon your reserve brigade in case of an attack,' I said to the young company commander.

"It means that we have to rely on ourselves,' he said. 'We know that we can't expect any help.'"

From the day of the Landing at Anzac it was a point of honour or pride in the Australian and New Zealand troops that those engaged upon non-combatant tasks should exhibit the same hardihood as if they were actually fighting. This applied particularly to the stretcher-bearers, but it was equally true of the transport drivers—usually bush-bred men, perhaps the cream of the infantry—and of the quartermaster's staff responsible for getting rations to the troops in the field, and of the cooks (often men rather old for the line). Not for any consideration would these men allow themselves to fall short of the standard of courage and enterprise set by their mates in the front line. Even less would the ration parties from the companies, which carried the rations over the final stage, "let down" their companies in the

**Front-line
supply**

³⁰ Actually there were, as already mentioned, the support battalion (21st) in trenches near Treux and Méricourt, from one to two miles behind the line.

outposts. This year many parts of that line on the plateaux both north and south of the Somme were impossible to reach in daylight; but Australian quartermasters⁴⁰ prided themselves upon getting a hot meal to the garrisons there at least once, sometimes twice, during every night. The organisation was now very good; most men knew not only what was their own duty but to what branch or department most other duties belonged. Messages, requests or information, automatically went to the right people, and their action thereon was made known to everybody who should know it. Like other supplies, meals now arrived at the right times and places. They had long since been carried in insulated food-containers in which they would remain hot for many hours. Where enough of these could not be obtained, the quartermasters improvised them—in the 56th Battalion, for example, the pioneers made sixty containers out of biscuit tins fitted into boxes lined with sawdust, in which a meal remained hot for eight hours and warm for twenty-four. The "cookers" were sometimes brought up to battalion headquarters, close behind the line, sometimes they lay as far back as Corbie. It was from this town that, in the short nights of July, meals were taken up to the 10th Brigade's posts south of Hamel, the regimental drivers often having to gallop their limbers through the shelling in the valley behind Vaire Wood. Opposite Morlancourt (the 54th Battalion records) even in the few hours of dark then available, two hot meals were sent nightly to the front line. The effect of this care and efficiency on the spirit and health of the troops was very great.

Such, in May 1918, were the officers and men whose decisions and actions were sufficiently effective to be a recognisable factor even in the great events that occurred during the months with which this volume deals. Leaving until later the discussion of certain ultimate reasons for this effectiveness, the narrative will now attempt to show, not by generalisation, but by description of the actual incidents in which they were developed, the methods practised upon the enemy by the men to whom the reader has been thus introduced.

⁴⁰ And regimental transport, whose efforts are praised in every war diary. Carriage from the dump forward was, of course, done by the line troops.

CHAPTER II

"PEACEFUL PENETRATION" BEGINS

WHATEVER their race, men of the kind described in the last chapter are not prone to let themselves be readily beaten by any opponent; and, if faced by an active enemy, these Diggers would have exerted their utmost effort to outmanoeuvre him. But, after the flood of the great offensive against the British, the German divisions left to hold its high water mark were, as the Australian infantry quickly noted, dispirited and inert. The average Digger, from the moment when, in March, news reached him of that onflowing wave, had been straining with confident eagerness to beat it back. And now that he had faced and held the already spent tide he was by no means content merely to watch across the sprouting crops in No-Man's Land the parapets of a motionless enemy.

It so happened that in the vital positions held both by the 1st Australian Division in Flanders and the Australian Corps in front of Amiens, it was urgent to gain ground, if possible, in order to allow more room for defence. This furnished a reason for activity in addition to the one then being urged by the staff on the fighting troops in all sectors, that the prime need was for information as to the probable direction of Ludendorff's next stroke. For such information the most important source was newly captured German prisoners. Normally the higher commanders obtained these by resort to fully planned raids—miniature battles which were hated by all except thoroughgoing fire-eaters, since they brought always intense local shelling and often painful losses. But each front-line battalion knew that, if its nightly patrols in No-Man's Land could seize one or another of the enemy's small posts or patrols, or even single men from

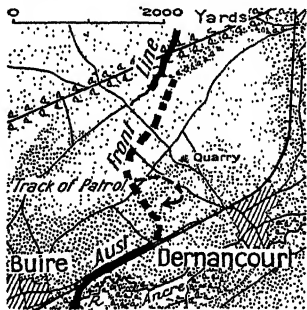
any of them, the need for a full-dress raid generally disappeared.¹

As a mere game, the cutting out of German posts or patrols was strongly enticing to the adventurous spirits that abounded in the A.I.F., but in some parts of the front such activity was impossible, the space between the opposing lines being too narrow and bare to allow manoeuvring even by night. On the sector of the Australian Corps in front of Amiens this was the case on both flanks. After Second Villers-Bretonneux the corps held, for a time, the whole of the Fourth Army's front. The northern flank of this, opposite Albert and Dernancourt, lay, where the Battle of Dernancourt had left it, on the bare promontory of the Laviéville heights, looking down upon the Germans at some 250 yards' distance. Here the German sentries had the Australian front-line posts on the sky-line, and any except the most cautious movement in No-Man's Land attracted the instant fire of machine-guns against which there was little or no cover.²

Immediately to the south, where this bare slope fell to the watery valley of the Ancre, the opposing lines were farther apart, and the old buildings of the casualty clearing station, the earthworks and borrow-pit of the Amiens-Albert railway around the foot of the heights, and the reedy grass of the flats gave more shelter against sight; and here the extreme right

¹ But not always. There were probably—though rarely—cases in which Germans had been supplied with false information and sent out with the object of getting themselves captured. This trick of forcing cards could be defeated by seizing part of the pack.

² On the night of April 8, immediately after the 2nd Aust. Div. first entered this sector and before the opposing lines had been fully connected, a small patrol of the 27th Bn. (S.A.) passed between the German posts west of the Quarry and, losing its way, wandered down the hill behind them until it ran into a working party of Germans not far from the railway. The patrol commander, Lt. L. V. Parkes (Waikerie, orchardist), was wounded, but his corporal, P. G. Scarman, (Port Pirie, labourer), carried him in. Pte. A. E. Brown (Adelaide, labourer), though wounded, made his way back the next night, but three men were missing of whom the Germans killed one and captured two. Later, at this point, no scout got past the German posts and few could approach them. One battalion alone, the 22nd (Victoria), lost in a few days three officers—one, Lt. A. R. Barker (Port Melbourne, accountant), killed, and two, Lts. J. H. B. Armstrong (Wangaratta) and J. M. Sutherland (Kew, Vic.) wounded—in leading patrols. Sgt. C. R. Waxman (Brunswick, Vic.) distinguished himself at this work.



flank of the 2nd Division had some chance of patrolling. In the 3rd Division's sector, over the high, bare tongue between the Ancre and the Somme, such opportunity existed chiefly in the two river valleys and the hollows leading down to them, where No-Man's Land was wide. The high summit between, along which ran the Bray-Corbie road, was covered with crops then only six inches high; and, as any one moving on it by day could be seen by friend and enemy from miles around, and in consequence had to move hurriedly even when a thousand yards behind the front, the approach was sometimes known as the "Mad Mile." Here, however, the distance between the opposing lines, the slight folds of the plateau, and the low bank of the road and those of its cross-roads offered chances to clever patrols. South of the Somme—where, since First Villers-Bretonneux (April 4th-5th), the flats at Bouzencourt and the bare spur leading to Hill 104 on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau had been held by the 5th Australian Division—the flats reaching towards Hamel, and the open valley above them, between the Australian line and that of the Germans at Vaire Wood, were favourable ground for bold scouting at night; but at the southern end of the corps front, in the sector of the 4th Division on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau, the bareness and flatness of the summit made it more difficult; indeed south of the railway, where the efforts to reach Monument Wood had left the Australian line within 200-250 yards of the German, anything more than defensive patrolling was then impossible. Immediately to the south, in front of the French, No-Man's Land widened greatly, but, as far as Hangard Wood on the southern edge of the plateau, was as shelterless as bare pasture. At Hangard Wood the lines again ran closer.

In preface to any account of the special activity of the Diggers, and of the results that later became so remarkable, it should first be made plain that other powerful means of wearing down the opposing infantry were at work and—according to German regimental histories³—were more harassing,

**Other
factors in
attrition**

³ Readers, however, become aware of a tendency in almost all regimental histories, Australian included, to attribute enemy successes to mechanical instrumentality—artillery fire, bombing and so forth—rather than to human ones; it is less hurtful to pride.

more dreaded, and in general the cause of even greater and more constant loss. Of all these influences the most damaging to the spirit of the German garrison was the constant harassing fire of the artillery; second to it came the continual bombing and machine-gunning by the airmen. The new field-guns of each side had a longer range than hitherto, and the flow of ammunition now feeding the artillery of the Allies enabled them to keep the German bivouacs and rest camps, and the routes of the nightly reliefs and food and ammunition parties, under frequent shell-fire, the most deadly form of which was a simultaneous crash of shells from a number of batteries suddenly directed on cross-roads or other centres which these fatigues were likely to be then passing. Many German histories describe the French artillery as more dangerous than the British because of the cleverness—in particular, the studied irregularity—with which these shoots were carried out. Nevertheless, of the bombardments experienced at this time at Dernancourt, the history of the German regiment which suffered from them—the 247th R.I.R.—particularly remarks that the opposing artillery "shot at times at which formerly we were not accustomed to it."⁴

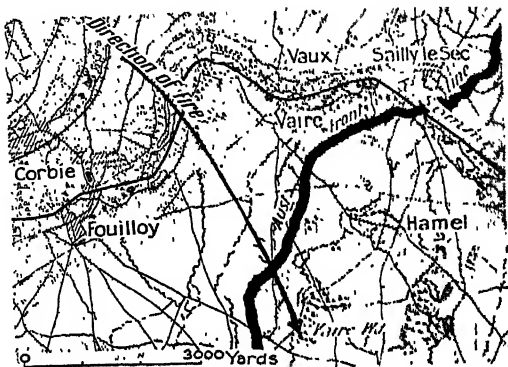
The effect of this constant infliction will be described in its place, but a few references to it in the histories of German regiments on the Amiens front may here be cited. The historian of the 86th Fusilier Regiment says that it was depressing to its troops to realise from the fire of the British artillery both at Morlancourt and Sailly-Laurette that, in spite of its immense losses of ammunition in the March retreat, its stocks were still noticeably greater than those of their own guns. Describing a "quiet" time on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau, the history of the 2nd Grenadier Regiment, fresh from Roumania, says that it received more artillery shots here in a day than rifle shots there in a week. The 265th R.I.R. remarked the strength of the artillery at Corbie which, "with splendid observation, harassed us systematically."⁵ A historian of the 1st German Division,⁶ which held Vaire Wood at

⁴ It is interesting to note that there is at least some evidence that both at Hazebrouck and at Villers-Bretonneux Australian artillery, at its first onset, may have been confused by the Germans with that of the French. See *History of the 12th Reserve F.A.R.* (p. 135), which says that on April 15, at Vieux Berquin the presence of French artillery was "unmistakable" from "its fire discipline and extreme suddenness of onslaught"; and the *History of the 1st Grenadier Regiment* p. 178, in which it is stated that French artillery had partly replaced British on April 7, the statement relating apparently to the Hamel front.

⁵ The history adds that the strength of this fire was obviously due to apprehension of a German attack.

⁶ *History of the 43rd I.R.*, p. 142.

the beginning of May, records that the deafening crash of the shell-bursts among the trees "had a depressing influence"; (the historian of the 265th R.I.R. also notes the "hellish uproar" in this wood of shells and aeroplane bombs at night). The British and Australian artillery observers on the Corbie heights constantly turned their batteries on troops seen moving in their opponents' back area, and it is interesting to learn that, on May 13, the companies of the 107th (Saxon) R.I.R., returning from a review by the King of Saxony at Chuignolles close behind the front, were marching "all too thoughtless, in close order," when they were seen and chased by the opposing artillery.⁷



Several hundred gas drums bursting simultaneously, and instantly covering some area in the enemy's line with a dense poison cloud, furnished another annoyance constantly practised by British engineer companies of the Special (gas) Brigade on every part of the front during this period. Unless the enemy's discipline and training in anti-gas drill were very good, these deluges always caused loss, for if a man did not realise what the explosions meant and failed to put on his mask instantly, there was little hope for him; a few breaths of this gas meant slow but certain death, with comrades watching for perhaps twelve hours the painful struggle for life. Units new to the active front or full of young reinforcements often suffered sharp losses from these attacks. The 108th Division, for example, fresh from quiet Champagne, lost at Hamel, in an explosion of gas drums on May 9th, an officer and 7 men killed and 30 badly gassed.

Gas projection

⁷ This king was unfortunate in his reviews at the front. Crown Prince Rupprecht records that three days later, when the same monarch had the 58th Div. on parade, English bombing aircraft flew over and dropped eight bombs. Panic set in, the bolder men threw themselves to the ground, many others ran away. "The King remained standing as if nothing had happened."

The enemy was also pestered by trench-mortar bombardments, particularly with a type of mortar that was only now coming into the fullest use—the "Newton,"⁸ a big 6-inch piece resembling the lighter Stokes and capable of firing at a quick rate a succession of powerful high explosive bombs. German regimental histories constantly record the effects of the British trench-mortars, but, though terrible instruments, they, like other smooth-bore guns, were less accurate than rifled artillery.⁹ In the case of the light Stokes mortars, the association of their batteries with the infantry led to any faults of aim being quickly corrected—if not immediately, at any rate on their next engagement.¹⁰ But, possibly on account of their range, defects in the use of Newtons were less easily checked, and at this particular time, in spite of their great effectiveness, several painful mishaps are recorded. Of infantry weapons the new No. 36 grenade—that is, the Mills grenade fitted with a disc and fired from rifles with cup attachment¹¹—was proving a most valuable instrument, since its range extended to 200 yards. Every platoon now had its quota of rifle-grenadiers who, together with the light trench-mortar battery, could at any time furnish their small unit with at least a sharp local barrage. They also constantly used their grenades to rout out any nest of the enemy whom they had located within their range, snipers and Lewis gunners then playing their

**The
T.M.'s**

**Rifle-
grenades**

⁸ They had taken the place of the old 2-inch medium trench-mortars, which fired "plum pudding" bombs attached to a metal rod. During the winter of 1917-18 British heavy and medium trench-mortar batteries had been reorganised. The heavy trench-mortar batteries—previously one four-gun unit for each division—had been reduced to a six-gun battery for each corps. This was equipped with a more effective type of 9.45-inch mortar, and now formed part of the heavy artillery. The medium trench-mortar batteries had been reduced from three to two per division (and numbered consecutively 1-10), but each was increased from four to six guns, and equipped with Newtons—a material accession to the strength of the field artillery.

⁹ The German *minenwerfer* were rifled, but fired at a much slower rate.

¹⁰ At this time, however, the light trench-mortar batteries were severely handicapped by the issue of a new type of ammunition (known as "blue rings" in distinction from the regular "green rings") which proved unreliable, and also by its flash betraying the battery position.

¹¹ No. 5 grenade was the Mills bomb, a segmented grenade splitting on burst into numerous small deadly fragments; No. 23, the old rifle-grenade, a Mills bomb with rod attachment; No. 34, the egg-bomb (a small bomb, only recently introduced in the British Army, capable of being thrown by hand a long distance); No. 35, the Hale percussion rifle-grenade, seldom supplied to the A.I.F.; No. 36, the Mills bomb with new disc, fired from a cup on the rifle by a strong blank cartridge. Nos. 23 and 36 could be used as hand bombs.

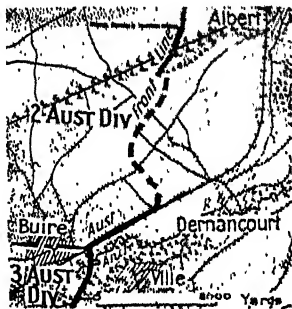
part in the game by shooting at the disturbed Germans as they ran.

Where No-Man's Land was narrow and bare, the aggressive activity of the front-line Diggers was restricted to sniping.

In this they sometimes found their opponents for a time exceedingly keen. Coming into the exposed position above Dernancourt, where forward trenches were at first shallow or non-existent,¹² the 2nd Australian Division for a few days suffered losses through German sharp-shooting. To suppress this the two brigades (7th and 6th) in the division's line¹³ carefully organ-

ised their snipers under special officers, somewhat on the lines followed at Anzac in Gallipoli. The ensuing contest was keen. Early on April 12th a pair of the 6th Brigade snipers, when getting to their positions in which they would lie during the day, were hit.¹⁴ On the night of the 15th Capt. Herbert of the 26th Battalion was mortally wounded by an active German sniper. But before many days it was the Germans who found it dangerous to expose themselves. As at Anzac, the Australian snipers went on to shoot down enemy periscopes. In the three weeks following April 8th the snipers of the 2nd Division claimed to have hit 127 Germans. By then the Germans showed themselves so little that the average number of hits daily had fallen from 7 to less than 3.¹⁵

On the bare back of the ridge between the Somme and Ancre also, and on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau and its northern slope, sniping was keen.



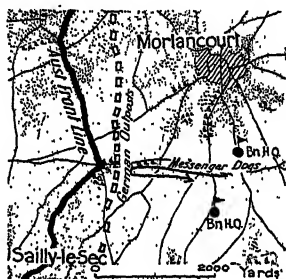
¹² The excellent pioneer trench became the support line.

¹³ The 5th was then detached, at Hangard Wood.

¹⁴ Sgt. E. F. Lamont (Brunswick, Vic.) of the 1st Battalion, seeing this, at once climbed out of the trench and ran fifty yards across the open to the fallen men. One, who was only slightly wounded, he bandaged and directed to crawl back; the other, although the Germans were firing at him, he carried to safety.

¹⁵ Occasionally identification was attempted by means of sniping: where some German had been killed in an accessible place, a patrol searched for the body at night. At least one was found at this time by the 7th Bde.

This was noted by the Germans. Prisoners examined at headquarters of the Fourth British Army emphasised the accuracy of Australian sharpshooting. The historian of the 90th R.I.R., which from May 27 to June 20 held the line astride of the Bray-Corbie road, notes that during the last part of its tenure its opponents shot at every head that showed. The history of the 265th R.I.R., which early in May held the northern slope of the Villers-Bretonneux plateau, says that "single snipers were very observant and subjected to well aimed fire the western slope of Vaire Wood and the communication trench running through the wood." The history of the sister regiment (97th I.R.), which lay on top of the plateau, states: "The enemy showed himself very lively and prevented almost any possibility of movement by day." Indeed, for the carriage of messages in daylight on the most exposed portions both of the Morlancourt ridge and the Villers-Bretonneux plateau, the Germans at this time had to rely almost exclusively upon messenger dogs. In the first fortnight of May, Rex and Greif, messenger dogs of the 31st I.R., made the dangerous run along the Bray-Corbie road at least four times daily. After that regiment had been relieved by the 232nd R.I.R., "the communication service (says the historian of this regiment) was discharged to our greatest satisfaction by our splendid dogs Else and Wolf." The Australian snipers often caught sight of the dogs, which had to run the gauntlet of their bullets, and at least one was shot and one (at Villers-Bretonneux) captured.¹⁶



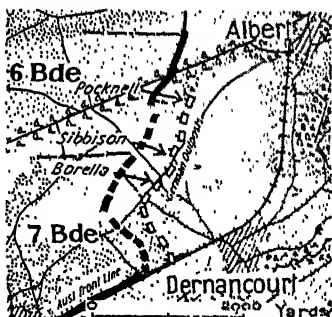
To these activities, but in particular to shelling and air-bombing, the intimate histories of the German front-line troops chiefly attribute the extraordinary state of tension which now quickly arose on the supposedly quiet fronts at Hazebrouck and on the Somme. But whereas the artillery and air force were presumably as active in many other sectors, there was at work on these fronts a special factor which will presently be described.

¹⁶ The Australians on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau afterwards tested the use of messenger dogs, which were then being supplied for experiment. The trial was not very successful. Men and officers tended to pet the dogs and feed them, which should only have been done by their keepers at the terminals of the run. For example, Dog 113, which had always been reliable, was sent to the 18th Bn. where the headquarters mess "fondled and patted it and finally fed it." It then refused to leave headquarters, a good dog being thus spoilt. For success—which meant saving of men's lives—the whole personnel of the corps would have had to be lectured on the need for leaving the dogs alone. A second impediment was the existence in Villers-Bretonneux of female dogs, left behind by the former inhabitants. In all, 21 messenger dogs were tested in the corps between May 2 and 9. Of 8 of these it is recorded that 4 were unreliable; 1 was hit; 3 worked well, covering 1½ miles in from 3 to 8 minutes, whereas runners would need 15-20 minutes. One dog took 1½ hours on the journey, and one 8½ hours.

In their new picnic surroundings, not if they could avoid it would Australian officers or men revert to the hateful raids

Raids

that punctuated the old nightmare of trench-warfare; but in one or two parts of the line, as has already been stated, there was no other way of obtaining prisoners, and raids therefore had to be organised. When, for example, in the second week of April, it became increasingly important to ascertain whether the enemy was concentrating, as Foch and Haig suspected, on the Ancre-Arras front, and all divisions in the front line were accordingly urged to secure prisoners, General Smyth, of the 2nd Australian Division on the Laviéville heights, had to ask his two brigadiers to suggest points at which raids could be immediately made. They forthwith obtained suggestions from the front-line battalion commanders, and on the following night, that of April 14th, the raids were launched across No-Man's Land—by the 26th, 21st, and 24th Battalions—at various points on the bare slope above Dernancourt. The night developed very dark, with drenching rain. The selected platoon of the 26th¹⁷ under Lieut. Borella¹⁸ was detected by the enemy while assembling in No-



Man's Land; rifles and machine-guns were turned upon it—one man was killed, another stunned by a shell, and the remainder were driven in.¹⁹ The platoon of the 24th under Lieut. Pocknell²⁰ succeeded in assembling 100 yards ahead of the Australian front line and, when the supporting artillery opened, advanced; but it was quickly seen and was stopped by machine-gun and rifle-fire 150 yards short of the enemy machine-gun

¹⁷ The raid commander was Capt. J. K. Murphy (Brisbane).

¹⁸ Lt. A. C. Borella, V.C., M.M.; 26th Bn. Farmer; of Borung, Vic.; b. Borung, 7 Aug. 1881.

¹⁹ The stunned man, Pte. W. Sommerfeld (Chinchilla, Q'land), on coming to his senses lost his way and lay out all day in a shell-hole, returning at night with information of some value.

²⁰ Lt. J. T. Pocknell, M.C.; 24th Bn. Farmer; of Kerang, Vic.; b. London, 1896. Died 1 Mar. 1935.

post that it was to capture. After waiting five minutes and seeing that the barrage caused no diminution in the German fire, and that success was beyond hope, Pocknell withdrew his party with the loss of one badly wounded man. In the sector of the 21st Battalion also, although the barrage was punctual, it did not suppress the fire of the front-line Germans, the shells bursting beyond them. Lieut. Sibbison²¹ and his platoon nevertheless pushed forward to within close range and tried to subdue with bombs the German post, which was their objective. Some of the party got within ten yards of the enemy, but, with a German machine-gun firing from fifty yards' distance on each flank and another from Dernancourt church, beyond, and the Germans themselves throwing Mills bombs, Sibbison was killed, his sergeant wounded, and many others hit. Sibbison's brave persistence merely resulted in the loss of just over half the party, of whom three were captured by the enemy, one of them, however, quickly escaping. A slightly wounded private, C. A. Ingle,²² guided the party back, and then twice returned to bring in more badly wounded men.²³

Far from "securing prisoners and information, keeping alive the fighting spirit of the troops, and inflicting loss on the enemy"—the usual reasons for such operations—these three raids presented prisoners to the Germans, threw away gallant lives and—though they could not, at this time, materially depress the bouncing spirits of the Australian infantry—certainly brought some passing cheer to the flagging spirit of the local enemy. By good fortune, that night a German of the 246th R.I.R., while bringing coffee to his front line, was wounded, lost his way, walked into the line of the 7th Brigade, and supplied the necessary information—that the division now facing the 2nd Australian was the 54th Reserve.

All raids were not so futile—scores of successful and useful ones have been recorded in earlier volumes of this history. But, especially when the arrangements were hurried, results such as

²¹ Lt. H. H. Sibbison, 21st Bn. Labourer; of Daylesford, Vic.; b. Daylesford, 20 Aug. 1888. Killed in action, 14 Apr. 1918.

²² Cpl. C. A. Ingle, M.M. (No. 6448; 21st Bn.). Public servant; of Murrumbidgee, Vic.; b. Chiltern, Vic., 1 Dec. 1891.

²³ A patrol brought back others on stretchers. Returning on a third journey, Ingle found no more wounded men, but brought in the papers from the body of a sergeant who had been shot in No-Man's Land two days before.

these were probable; and the operations which have now to be described were based almost as much on a negative desire—to avoid the necessity of undertaking formal raids—as on positive ones—to secure information for the Allies, hammer the enemy, steal, if possible, some useful ground, and, not least, enjoy the excitements of big game hunting.

Among the Australians on the Somme the first of the long string of incidents that came to be known in the A.I.F. as "peaceful penetration,"²⁴ appears to have been the one (described in the previous volume) in which a corporal of the 58th Battalion, D. A. Sayers, holding a tiny post on the Somme flats near Hamel, seized a chance of cutting off a patrol of some thirty Germans which, under an officer, advanced from that village across the wide No-Man's Land towards the Australian line on the afternoon of April 5th.²⁵

It was in the valley leading down from the Villers-Bretonneux plateau to Hamel that several of the more striking examples of early peaceful penetration occurred. On the evening of April 9th, a patrol of the 14th (N.S.W.) Brigade found its way into the German line, met a machine-gun post, killed one German, chased away the rest, and brought in some of the dead man's belongings for evidence of his identity. On the night of April 13th a patrol of twenty men of the 53rd (New South Wales) Battalion under Lieut. Stinson,²⁶ searching for Germans to capture, when 250 yards out detected by the sound of voices a strongly garrisoned German post. Two men were sent on to study its position. Presently a German came from it, apparently to take up duty as a listener. "Our men rushed him,"

²⁴ In the years before the war, when German trade was spreading swiftly through most British territories, it was a commonplace of the patriotic British press and platform that the Germans had no need to fight—they were gaining the British Empire by "peaceful penetration." The Australian soldier now described by that name his activities in quietly cutting out his opponents' posts or nibbling at their line. Similar enterprises at Messines in 1917 have been referred to in *Vol. IV* (p. 604) as "prospecting." The first reference to "peaceful penetration" by that name in the official records of the A.I.F. appears to occur in the orders of the 46th Bn. for April 30. At Hébuterne the 4th Brigade was practising peaceful penetration by April 1 (*See Vol. V*, p. 142).

²⁵ *See Vol. V*, pp. 526-7. The sending of this patrol to see if further progress could be made appears to have been the last German act in the offensive north of the Somme on April 4 and 5.

²⁶ Lt. J. Stinson, M.C.; 53rd Bn. School teacher; of Bathurst, N.S.W.; b. Blayney, N.S.W., 6 Sept. 1890.

says the battalion diary, "and with a secure grip succeeded in getting him off from under the eyes of the post without attracting attention." He proved to belong to a regiment that had just come into the line. On the same night the 53rd took a light machine-gun from a German party that stumbled on to one of its posts, and in the same brigade the 56th Battalion secured one prisoner and the 55th another. "There is great rivalry between the two line battalions," says the brigade diary, "and they are each out to secure as many as possible and establish a record."²⁷

The Second Battle of Villers-Bretonneux did not interrupt this contest. On April 28th battalions were again informed that a "talkative Boche" was wanted, and after keen scouting, on May 5th—a night of heavy rain—Lieut. Neville²⁸ of the 55th Battalion detected a suitable German post, apparently held by three men. His party rushed the post. Two of the Germans ran, but the third attacked Neville. All were killed. While the bodies were being searched for papers, two others came up and attacked, but were killed when ten yards away.

Another German post was known to exist in the neighbourhood of a quarry 250 yards ahead of the line, at the crossing of the Fouilloy-

²⁷ This rivalry led to a strange incident. On the night of April 19, when the 14th Bde. gave up part of its front immediately north of the Roman road at Villers-Bretonneux to the 8th Brit. Div., one of its signallers, Sydney Lewis, was found to be missing. Lewis, a man of 39 years (formerly a sailor in the United States Navy, but Sydney born and before enlistment a painter at Redfern) had a hobby of carving in stone, and had recently "differed" with battalion headquarters, where the commanding officer had failed to appreciate the offer of a bust of Napoleon carved in the local chalk. On the night of the relief, apparently after sampling the *vin blanc* that still occasionally blessed treasure-seekers in Villers-Bretonneux, he recollected that he had left the precious souvenir in the trenches and decided to return for it. Losing his way, he presently found himself in a front trench occupied by the relieving Sherwood Foresters. Upon his telling them that he had come back for a souvenir, they indicated that there were plenty of souvenirs "over there," nodding towards the German trenches. Lewis knew that prisoners were greatly wanted, and he probably judged that his return with one might mollify headquarters when he reported after "absence without leave." So, telling the "Tommies" that he would get one, he climbed from the trench, with bayonet fixed, and strolled into German territory. Seeing a number of men working (as he told the examining officer afterwards), he yelled and cheered and began to "demonstrate with the bayonet." More Germans appeared. In English (mixed, he thought, on recollection, with a little French, and maybe some Dutch) he ordered them to their dugouts, saying that he required only one. "They must have understood, because they ran off"—except one, a small youth, whom he cut off and then steered back with the bayonet to the astonished Foresters. He would not give his prisoner up, even to Australian officers met in Villers-Bretonneux, but, after sleeping with the prisoner's coat buttoned to his own to prevent escape, made his way through the back area until he found Lt. Brackpool (of Ashfield, N.S.W.) of his own battalion, and duly delivered the German to the examining authorities. The youth, a private of the 3rd Bavarian Ersatz I.R., appeared to look on his captor as his protector. He confirmed the details of the story. Lewis died in 1924.

²⁸ Lt. D. T. W. Neville, M.C., D.C.M.; 55th Bn. Bank clerk; of Darlinghurst, N.S.W.; b. Darlinghurst, 16 July 1896.

Warfusée and Hamel-Villers-Bretonneux roads. On the night of May 11th a patrol of nine of the 56th Bn., under Lt. Poore,²⁹ went out intending to discover its precise position and then to seize it, a party under Lt. Threlkeld and some Stokes mortars of the 14th Light Trench Mortar Battery being ready to cover them if required. Rifle-grenades, fired in the supposed direction of the post, drew a salvo of stick-bombs from it, but even then it could not be precisely located. Creeping to the roadside, however, the patrol saw four Germans coming along the track. These were allowed to pass and were then bombed. One was killed, one mortally wounded, and two fled. The Stokes mortars bursting their shells frightened the nearest German machine-gunners from interfering while the patrol brought in the mortally wounded man. He proved to belong to the 265th R.I.R., 108th Divn., which six days before had arrived at this front from the Aisne. Six days later Lt. Neville, leading a patrol of fourteen men, again managed to find two German listening posts, and captured both, killing two of their occupants, capturing three,³⁰ and meanwhile keeping back the German pickets which tried to advance from Vaire Wood to the rescue. The prisoners belonged to the 419th I.R., of the 77th Res. Divn., which had just relieved the 108th.

On the Somme flats the 5th Division's left brigade (8th) succeeded in several similar actions:

Lt. Treasure³¹ of the 32nd (South and Western Australia) Bn. with a patrol of eighteen men, searching on the night of April 18 for a German post to attack, detected one by the sound of coughing. He had just managed to sight the figures in it when one of the nightly shells of the supporting artillery fell short among his men, killing one, wounding three, and foiling the enterprise. On the following night, however, going out after moonset with a dozen men, he met a German patrol of twenty. With his revolver Treasure shot its leader. His Lewis gunner quickly killed six more, and the patrol returned with a prisoner of the 43rd I.R. (1st Divn.).

But in the Somme valley during the next fortnight prisoners, though much wanted, were very difficult to secure. In parts of the area patrols lay nightly on the edge of the German wire, hoping to catch a German patrol, but without success. North of the river³² raids had to be ordered, but south of it a very bold enterprise averted this necessity.

Immediately after sunset on May 2 Lt. Hill³³ with a patrol of fourteen of the 31st Bn. (Q. and Vic.) moved down the road from Bouzencourt to

²⁹ Lt. R. J. Poore, M.C.; 56th Bn. Mechanical engineer; of Fernbank, Vic.; b. Sale, Vic., 27 Nov. 1886. Died 15 July 1940.

³⁰ Two of these were wounded.

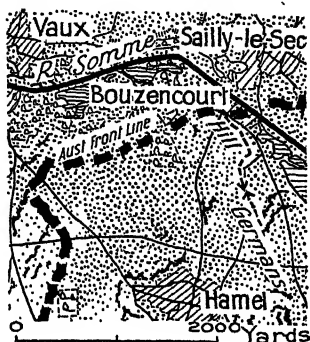
³¹ Lt. C. W. Treasure, 32nd Bn. School teacher; of Collie, W. Aust.; b. Bruton, Somerset, Eng., 24 Oct. 1890.

³² On the night of April 21 the flank of the 8th Bde. was extended north of the Somme, relieving part of the 3rd Div., which in its turn shifted slightly northwards.

³³ Lt. A. H. Hill, M.C.; 31st Bn. Grazier; of Binnaway, N.S.W.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 1 Aug. 1888.

wards Hamel, dropping covering posts on his way, and finally lying up with two N.C.O's and one private close in front of a German listening post, known to be manned only at night. Eventually two Germans came along the road, presumably to occupy the post. On many previous occasions Germans had almost walked into the waiting patrols, only to detect some suspicious sound or appearance and bolt back. This time Hill fired when the men were thirty yards away, but he only hit one man slightly in the leg. Both Germans scrambled out up the road-bank. Hill chased one, calling him to surrender. After a short run the German gave up,³⁴ saying in English, "Very good, Sir." He was found to belong to the 133rd R.I.R.

of the 24th (Saxon) Res. Divn. which was just relieving the 1st.³⁵

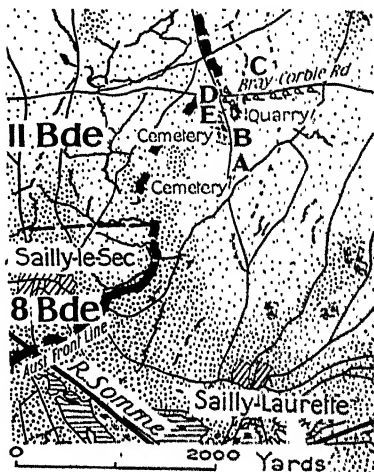


Although the 14th and 15th Brigades (5th Division) may perhaps be said to have initiated the campaign of peaceful penetration on this front, the most constant stream of prisoners appears to have been maintained by the youngest Australian division—the 3rd (Major-General Monash), which still held the high peninsula between Somme and Ancre. Throughout the quiet month of April this division contrived to capture Germans on three days out of every five. In this activity its most successful brigade was the 11th (Outer States), whose sector at the beginning of the period extended from Sully-le-Sec on the Somme to a point a little north of the Bray-Corbis road on the heights. On most of this sector a wide valley then lay between the scattered outposts of Germans and Australians, and sunken roads, two cemeteries, small copses and hedges, and a quarry afforded, in spite of the general bareness, a chance of approaching or ambushing the listeners who lay out nightly in front of the German outpost-

³⁴ A second shot from Hill had hit him in the mouth.

³⁵ A few evenings later in the air over Hamel a machine of the 80th Squadron R.A.F., flown by Lt. H. V. Barker was shot down by Richthofen's former squadron and, landing near the same German night-post, overturned. The pilot was seen to fall from the stranded machine. Hill (together with Pte. H. Boughton, of West Maitland, N.S.W. who volunteered to help) at once went out 500 yards with a stretcher, in daylight, and returned carrying the pilot, the Germans in their neighbouring line looking on without firing. Hill immediately afterwards took out a patrol to prevent the Germans from approaching the plane at night.

line. On April 9th Brig.-Genl. Cannan told his battalion commanders that he desired the brigade to maintain an aggressive attitude, inflicting casualties and taking prisoners, but the schemes were to be only small ones, involving the use of few men—a provision according with his earlier tactics in this sector.³⁶ "An identification every twenty-four hours . . . at the present stage of the war," he added, "is invaluable." A series of patrol schemes was at once devised by the regimental officers, the artillery being asked in some cases to assist with a short barrage on the post to be attacked, in others to distract the enemy's attention and drown noise by steadily shelling some other post.



The places where the 41 Bn. raided are shown thus:

- A—Burtenshaw's Raid
 B—Tredenick's. C—Butler's.
 D—Wiles's. E—Wiles and Burtenshaw's.

On the night of April 13 Lt. Green³⁷ of 43rd Bn. (S.A.) with twenty men, although a shell of their own artillery burst among them at the start, after finding an enemy post on the Bray-Corbie road empty, discovered another farther north and rushed and captured its occupant.³⁸ The whole of the following night was spent by Lt. Burtenshaw³⁹ of the 41st Bn. (Q.) with two headquarters scouts and sixteen other men, trying to locate and cut out a small German post at a "lone tree" marking one of the cemeteries on the opposite slope. In the early morning, covered by the noise of a machine-gun barrage, the party managed to get near the place. The Germans fired a flare, betraying their exact position, and two of them presently came out towards the party, but when twenty yards away, detected it and ran. The patrol at once gave chase, killing one and rushing the post where another German was

³⁶ See Vol. V, pp. 212, 219-20.

³⁷ Lt. W. H. Green, M.C., 43rd Bn. Iron foundry foreman; of Richmond, S. Aust.; b. Hindmarsh, S. Aust., 14 June 1895.

³⁸ The prisoner was from the 31st I.R. (18th Div.).

³⁹ Lt. F. J. Burtenshaw, M.C.; 41st Bn. Farmer; of Brisbane; b. Bowen, Q'land, 25 Dec. 1892. Killed in action, 15 May 1918.

killed and three were captured, two escaping. The Queenslanders returned without casualty. The prisoners were of the 18th Divn.⁴⁰

In the 41st Battalion the capturing of Germans now developed, as its war diary states, "into a sort of company competition."

On the night of the 15th Lt. Tredenick⁴¹ with two scouts and sixteen others entered the German front and, though the patrol was seen and flares were rising and machine-guns firing, found and charged a post; but in the excitement of the bomb-fight the only German who stayed to be caught was killed, and no identification was secured. Two nights later Lt. Butler, on patrol with scouts E. Dixon⁴² and N. S. Murray⁴³ and fourteen other men, after being baffled in one attempt, arranged for a field-howitzer battery to conceal his noise by firing one shell per minute at a German machine-gun 500 yards to the north. He then cut the German wire and passed the patrol through it, leaving his Lewis-gun team beside the Bray-Corbie road to cover them. From the dark ahead came many sounds of coughing and active digging, but presently, by a cough and the smell of tobacco, a passive post was located. Butler crawled from the rear to within five yards of it before he was challenged. On his word, "At them!", in face of a dozen scattered shots the post was rushed, nine Germans were killed, and two hauled out alive. Other posts then awoke, but the party came back without a casualty, bringing its prisoners who were found to belong to a freshly inserted division, the 50th Reserve.⁴⁴

On the same night (April 17) Lt. Wiles⁴⁵ in the valley found a suitable post to raid, and at dusk next day tried to seize it. But the moon was now half-full, and, though many Germans were seen, the night was much too bright for an ambush. Some Germans were fired on. Wiles, chasing them, could not catch one, but wrongly understanding from his men that another had been secured, withdrew the party. As soon as he realised the mistake he returned to the spot with the scout Dixon, and cut from the tunic of a dead German a shoulder strap of the 18th Divn., which was thought to have been just relieved there. This created a problem for General Monash's staff, and Wiles was then told that it was "absolutely necessary" to capture a live German that night. To avoid mistakes, he asked to be allowed to take a second officer and chose Lt. Burtenshaw. Again the moonlight was too bright, but after moonset the patrol, going out again, ran upon a German post in some bushes beside a sunken road on the far side of the valley. The Australians fired and charged, and, though five of them

⁴⁰ They belonged to the 31st I.R. On the same night, lower down near Sailly-Laurette, a German sergeant-major stumbled into a wiring party of the 44th Bn. and was made prisoner. He belonged to the 85th I.R., of the same division.

⁴¹ Lt. R. Tredenick, 41st Bn. Shipping clerk; of Newmarket, Q'land; b. Hoxton Park, N.S.W., 27 June 1893.

⁴² L.-Cpl. E. Dixon, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 1811; 41st Bn.). Orchardist; of Elimbah, Q'land; b. East Cottesworth, Yorks., Eng., 8 Sep. 1891.

⁴³ Cpl. N. S. Murray, M.M. (No. 7603; 41st Bn.). School teacher; of Bundaberg, Q'land; b. Drummer's Creek, Q'land, 25 Dec. 1897.

⁴⁴ It had been rested for a week after the fight at Dernancourt.

⁴⁵ Maj. H. J. Wiles, D.S.O.; 41st Bn. Upholsterer; of Mackay, Q'land; b. Bedford, Eng., 15 Nov. 1894.

were wounded by the bombs thrown at them, their seven opponents did not wait but ran. Determined to secure one, and being a fast runner, Wiles gave chase. He caught his German within thirty yards and, though his own revolver was empty and the man he chased had rifle and bayonet, dragged him struggling back. Though flares were now shooting up and machine-guns firing from other posts the party returned safely. The prisoner proved to be of the 85th I.R., 18th Divn.—only its two northern regiments had been relieved by the 50th Res. Divn.; the third continued to hold a narrow front north of the Somme.

Immediately after these exceedingly successful operations, on the night of April 21st the sectors of the Australian Corps front were readjusted; the 3rd Division shifted slightly northwards, and the 5th Division extended its left north-east of Sailly-le-Sec. The 8th Brigade whose 29th Battalion (Vic.) now held that sector, made constant attempts to cut off German posts, but the enemy was by then too alert.⁴⁰

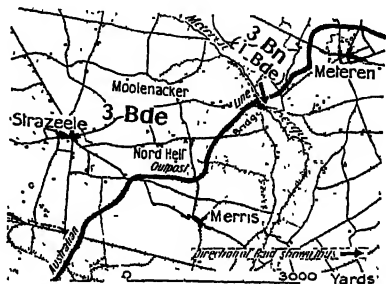
Farther north, in the Ancre valley, peaceful penetration, though at first less active than on the slope to the Somme, led directly to the attacks at Morlancourt and Ville, the first operations of any importance undertaken on the British side in this region since the great German offensive. But, before the narrative turns to these, it must describe the operations in which peaceful penetration developed most quickly and ultimately led to its most surprising results. These activities were those of the 1st Australian Division, then detached in Flanders.

When the German offensive on the Lys was slackening—three weeks after a similar stage had been reached on the Somme—the 1st Australian Division, then
At Hazebrouck holding the Hazebrouck front with its southern brigade facing Merris and its northern round Meteren (which place it had unsuccessfully attacked), was informed on April 27th that its corps (XV) required prisoners from the German divisions opposite—especially the 12th and 81st Reserve Divisions. In Flanders the existence of hedges

⁴⁰ On the night of April 28, when assembling his party to attack a front-line post near the Somme, Lt. D'Alton (Brighton, Vic.) was hit, as were several of his men; and when on the night of May 1 the post was raided by two parties, each 15 strong, under Lts. Harper and Lambden (Moorabbin, Vic.), the Germans—detecting their approach by the light of incendiary shells from the Newton mortars, which by accident burst behind the advancing men—fell back on their picket. The picket in turn, when attacked, retired on its support, which held a wired position 100 yards in rear, too strong to seize, though the Victorians followed and bombed it. On the night of May 3, when Lambden and Harper were trying to surround another post, a Newton shell fell on the party, wounding Harper and five men.

around the fields gave the scouts, even by day, a screen which was almost entirely lacking in the Somme area.

Being reminded on April 30th that it was imperative that prisoners should be obtained, all four battalions of the 1st Division in the line⁴⁷ sent out patrols that night to find and, if possible, capture German listening posts. The first of these patrols, comprising Sergt. Buckley⁴⁸ and two men of the 3rd Battalion (N.S.W.), went out at 9.45. Leaving the outpost-line in the valley of the little Meteren stream, half-way between the two villages, they made their way towards a German post suspected to exist near the bridge over the stream, 100 yards or more from their own post. The night was dark but they found the trench, and at 10 o'clock seized its solitary occupant, a listener of the 156th I.R. (11th Reserve Division). By 10.30 news of the capture had been telegraphed to divisional headquarters.



A patrol of the next battalion on the south, the 7th—of the 2nd Brigade (Victoria)—under Lieut. Gaulton,⁴⁹ unknowingly rushed the same position half an hour later; but half a mile to the south-west Sergt. Charville⁵⁰ with eight men found an occupied post, and, after bombing and rushing it, tried to carry off its four wounded occupants. These, however, shouted to the next German post. As they could not be quietened, three were killed and the Victorians carried off the fourth, who proved to belong to the 23rd I.R. (12th Division). In the 8th Battalion, Lieut. Dowling⁵¹ with four men managed to surround a post 200 yards out on Mont

⁴⁷ The 1st Bde. had relieved the 3rd in the left sector, around Meteren, on the night of April 27.

⁴⁸ Sgt. G. H. Buckley (No. 706; 3rd Bn.). Blacksmith; of Sydney; b. Gundagai, N.S.W., 1890.

⁴⁹ Maj. F. B. Gaulton, 7th Bn. Gas-fitter; of Castlemaine, Vic.; b. Castlemaine, 11 Oct. 1894.

⁵⁰ Sgt. J. Charville, D.C.M. (No. 2334; 7th Bn.). Saddler, of South Melbourne; b. Collingwood, Vic., 15 Feb. 1888.

⁵¹ Lt. R. W. Dowling, M.C., 8th Bn. Bootmaker; of Richmond, Vic.; b. Kerang, Vic., 15 Aug. 1896. Died 9 Feb. 1928.

de Merris. Rushing it the party killed two and captured three men of the 63rd I.R. (12th Division).

This thoroughly successful beginning inaugurated a succession of enterprises, which increased in boldness and effect until their climax, three months later. Only the first stages must here be told.

At dawn on May 5 Cpl. Lean⁵² of the 4th Bn. on his own responsibility carried through a more extensive enterprise. Catching sight of a single German behind a hedge near the same stream, he crept out alone and captured him. But during the excursion he saw another post containing several men. Accordingly, after returning with his prisoner, he led out two comrades and, creeping to the trench, rushed it from the rear. One of the enemy was bayoneted, and, with three others, was brought back. They were Silesians of the 62nd I.R. (12th Divn.), and, as their statements gave the impression that the Germans here were much disorganised, the harassing fire of the artillery was ordered to be doubled.

This attack had been carried out in the full light of day, with the neighbouring posts of the 1st Brigade looking on. The patrols of the 3rd Brigade,⁵³ whose left flank post lay west of the stream, had not recently taken a prisoner. But, early in the hot afternoon of May 8th, the brigade intelligence officer, Capt. Keighley,⁵⁴ with his corporal, R. Wearmouth,⁵⁵ appeared at the flank post of the 11th Battalion while the subaltern in charge, Lieut. Norrie,⁵⁶ was munching his dinner.

"They say our Intelligence is no good and we can't get prisoners," said Keighley, a little, highly strung Englishman from Western Australia. "I'm going out to see if we can"—and out went he and the corporal.

"I thought it was just a wild freak," said Norrie afterwards, "and so did my sergeant. We sat down again, agreeing that it would probably be our nasty job to go out that night and fetch in the two bodies, if possible." For a long time nothing happened. Then (said Norrie) "my sergeant came: 'Here's Captain Keighley coming back with a big Fritz'—and there was Keighley coming along with his tin hat in one hand and swinging his revolver in the other. Behind him was a big German with his shirt open at the neck and no helmet, looking very scared; behind

⁵² Sgt. J. Lean, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 3150; 4th Bn.). Wicker-worker; of Ultimo, N.S.W.; b. Ultimo, 29 Jan. 1894.

⁵³ It had now relieved the 2nd.

⁵⁴ Capt. A. S. Keighley, M.C.; 11th Bn. Theatrical producer and manager; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. Keighley, Yorks, Eng., 24 May 1882.

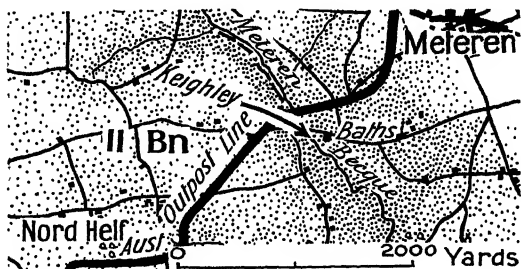
⁵⁵ Sgt. R. Wearmouth, M.M. (No. 5236; 11th Bn.). Prospector; of Coolgardie, W. Aust.; b. Clunes, Vic., 13 Aug. 1887.

⁵⁶ Lt. A. Norrie, M.C.; 11th Bn. Bank clerk; of Cottesloe, W. Aust.; b. Warrnambool, Vic., 5 Feb. 1890.

him again was the corporal with his bayonet almost stuck into the German."

Keighley had gone straight out into the wheatfield and along hedges and ditches and the stream to a building known as the Meteren "Baths"⁵⁷ in the corner of the next field—a point from which a German sniper was said to have been shooting. The buildings were empty, and as

Keighley fossicked round, finding some small empty trenches, he narrowly escaped shooting by the posts of the 1st Bde. which noticed movement in the place. "He was almost coming away," said Norrie, "when he saw a bit of a pozzey, and look-



ing into it found a big German with his helmet off and shirt open, hunting for lice in his chest. Keighley had no revolver but he hissed to the corporal to give him his—and put it almost in the German's stomach and brought him in." The man, who also belonged to the 62nd I.R., said that the fire of the Australian trench-mortars early that morning had caused his comrades in the post to run back to the main line, but he had decided to remain, believing that the artillery fire on the main line was more dangerous.

As a sequel to these excursions Meteren Baths were raided by a party of the 9th Battalion under Lieut. Gower⁵⁸ and were eventually burnt down.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ It had been used for baths and laundry when Meteren was in the British back area.

⁵⁸ Lt. H. R. Gower, M.C.; 9th Bn. Clerk; of Rockhampton, Q'land; b. Gympie, Q'land, 20 Jan. 1893.

⁵⁹ Gower's raid was a formal operation but was followed by several examples of peaceful penetration. The object of the raid was to occupy the baths. Under cover of a five minutes' bombardment by the Newton mortars of the 1st Medium Trench Mortar Bty. under Lt. V. Mulroney (Cassilis and Ungarie, N.S.W.) they were attacked from two directions, and taken. The raiders found west of the baths only two small posts, each of two Germans, whom they captured. Seeing that the baths themselves were behind the alignment of the enemy's front, Capt. J. F. McNaught (Toowong, Q'land) did not occupy them but placed a post near by, in line with several others just established. While one of the posts was being dug, Lt. H. N. Knowles (Brisbane) had his platoon fired on by Germans with a machine-gun. He crawled to within twenty yards, threw a bomb into the enemy, killed three, and brought back the machine-gun. L.-Cpl. W. F. Allan (Chelmer, Q'land) crept out into the hopfield and captured three Germans, and Pte. E. Dagg (Dungarubba and Coraki, N.S.W.) captured a listener. In all an N.C.O. and nine others, all of the 62nd I.R., were captured. Before the attack a prisoner had also been brought in by L.-Cpl. T. Howard (Toowoomba, Q'land), who, seeing someone stirring in front of his position, went out and captured him.

An attempt on May 12 to set fire to the baths with incendiary bombs from Newton mortars failed, as the bombs did not explode, but the burning of the building was completed on the night of the 12th by Cpl. C. Holm.

Several new posts were established in this operation, and the garrison of one of them spent the next day sniping at a German post visible 175 yards away, near the baths. At dusk a German tried to bolt from this post, but was shot. Thereupon Cpl. Carl Holm,⁶⁰ of the Australian post, taking four of his men, crept round the northern side of the German post and, rushing it, captured its garrison of eleven. From the captured position another post could be seen, with a machine-gun sticking out from its parapet. An officer and two men went out and found the post empty, but brought in a British Vickers machine-gun.

At this stage the Meteren sector was taken over by the 31st Division,⁶¹ and for the next month the 1st Australian Division was allowed to rest two of its brigades, holding the front opposite Merris with only one.⁶² By this means the Second Army contrived to keep the division continuously in the main Hazebrouck defences—on the Strazeele ridge—as was desired. On this front the 2nd Brigade, relieving the 1st on May 13th, continued peaceful penetration with astonishing success.

The commander of its left company, Capt. Maltby,⁶³ of the 5th Bn., finding that his posts were not as far forward as was shown on the map and that their outlook was much restricted by the Merris spur, decided to advance them. He therefore told his platoon commanders to find the position of the opposing German posts in order that these might be rushed. During the company's first night in the sector two of his subalterns, Lts. Garlick⁶⁴ and Maddox,⁶⁵ scouting in No-Man's Land, met some Germans and in an exchange of bombs Garlick was slightly wounded. By this time the German garrisons were becoming very cautious—their small advanced posts (mostly a section of six or seven men) frequently retired to the main line as soon as they caught sight of approaching Australians. This night, however, a man was shot, and the 62nd I.R. was found to be still in the line; and

⁶⁰ Sgt. C. Holm, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 2162; 9th Bn.). Miner; of Mount Morgan, Q'land; b. Gympie, Q'land, 25 May 1886.

⁶¹ On May 4, to support the flank of an offensive by the 133rd and other divisions of the French D.A.N. north-west of Meteren, the 1st Aust. Bn. advanced two posts. The operation was carried out by parties under Lts. H. H. Davis (Balham, Eng., and Sydney) and W. H. Parkinson (Paddington, N.S.W.). Davis's party had much difficulty. In the preliminary patrol the position where the post was to be placed was found to be held by Germans with a machine-gun. Davis himself crept forward and tried to dislodge them with bombs. As his bombs failed to effect this, he sent for an additional supply, posted a Lewis gun to fire on the Germans from the flank, and then sent Cpl. J. Gill (East Maitland, N.S.W.) with a party along a hedge to bomb the Germans from the rear. As the bombs burst, Davis with the rest of his party rushed the position. The Germans fled, but their papers showed them to belong to the 96th I.R. Although the French, after a first success, fell back to their old line, the 1st Bn. maintained its new posts.

⁶² The brigade front, however, was slightly extended south of the railway.

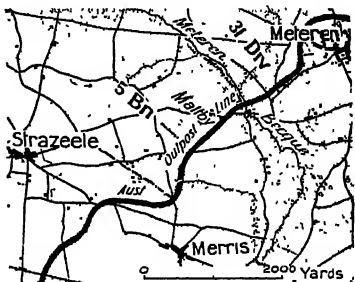
⁶³ Maj. T. K. Maltby, 5th Bn. Shipping clerk; of Yarraville, Vic.; b. Barnedown, Vic., 19 Oct. 1889.

⁶⁴ Lt. H. W. Garlick, 5th Bn. Farrier; of Kerang, Vic.; b. Macorna, Vic., 1888. Killed in action, 11 July 1918.

⁶⁵ Lt. N. S. Maddox, M.C.; 5th Bn. Jackaroo; of Windsor, Vic., and Q'land; b. Launceston, Tas., 28 Feb. 1892. Died 4 Aug. 1941.

by daylight next day Garlick and Maddox and a patrol of ten, detecting Germans behind a hedge, managed to creep close to it and then rushed and bombed the position. Five Germans fled leaving a mortally wounded N.C.O. of the same regiment. One of Capt. Maltby's posts was then advanced.

This day, and the next, the Germans were so active with their machine-guns and rifles that it was suggested that the garrisons had been changed.⁶⁶ "Peaceful" enterprises became more difficult. Early on May 17, however, Lt. Maddox, scouting with four men, crept through the crop to the rear of a German post and found it to contain about fifteen. Forming the opinion that these could easily be captured Maddox quietly returned with his party to the Australian line and arranged that rifle-grenadiers and a Lewis gunner should immediately play on the Germans in order to keep their heads down. At 11.20 with the same party and four other men he went out again, the rifle-grenadiers and from a flank, the Lewis gunner, still firing on the post while the party crept out through the crop to within thirty yards of it and then crawled out into the open surrounding it. On a signal the barrage stopped, the Lewis gunner switched his fire on to a gap in a hedge—the only line for the German retreat—and the nine Victorians rushed the position. The Germans at once made for the gap, and the Lewis gun shot down five but jammed. Cpl. Williams⁶⁷ rushed towards them and one man grappled with him but was shot by Maddox and immediately afterwards was blown to pieces by a bomb meant for the others. From their shoulder straps it was seen that the 62nd I.R. was still in the line. While the party was searching for other means of identification, it was attacked by some thirty Germans from the next post and Maddox withdrew his party fighting.⁶⁸



Next day, May 18, the weather was particularly hot. Fifty miles to the south, on the Somme, as will be told later, some New South Welshmen found on that drowsy morning an opportunity to carry out one of the holdest enterprises in the history of their force. And here in Flanders two Victorians, looking out from a post on the left of the brigade's sector, saw three Germans get out of a trench, take off their coats, and lie down behind a hedge, apparently to doze. After allowing time for them to fall asleep, the two Diggers crawled out beyond the stream to catch them. They were already close when two of the Germans took alarm and ran away. The third, wakened by his comrades' shouts,

⁶⁶ A patrol of the 8th Bn., however, under Lt. J. G. Kennedy (Dandenong, Vic.) when a third of a mile out shot a man of the 63rd I.R.

⁶⁷ Sgt. S. L. Williams, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 1168; 5th Bn.). Seaman; of Christchurch, N.Z., and Melbourne, b. Timaru, N.Z., 5 May 1890.

⁶⁸ On reaching the Australian post Lt.-Cpl. T. Haydon was found to be missing. Maddox and some men at once went out in face of German fire, found him badly wounded, and brought him in.

was caught after a keen chase behind the German front line, and brought back.

He, too, belonged to the 62nd I.R.—a recruit on his first tour in the line. The 12th German Divn. had lately received a large number of such men—an Australian diary says: "They were very young and simple and the 1st Division has simply been playing with them."

That same night a carefully planned raid by Capt. Maltby's company found the attacked trench empty, and five slight casualties were suffered. The spontaneous raids, however, continued with few serious failures. On May 19 the sentry in Lt. Garlick's left post saw a man moving south of the Meteren Becque, apparently in or about a post. Cpl. Allen⁶⁹ and four men accordingly crept along a hedge leading to the stream and thence by way of its banks to within twenty yards of the post. At this stage the sentry there gave the alarm and a machine-gun was turned upon the party; but Allen and three men answered the fire, and the fourth, Pte. Maher,⁷⁰ rushed the trench, shot one German and bayoneted another, and then cut the shoulder straps from the uniform of each. Garlick's posts watching the fight now opened fire, under cover of which the party safely returned, only one of its members having been slightly wounded. The shoulder straps—of the 269th R.I.R.—showed that the 81st Res. Divn. had been put in. This enterprise concluded the extraordinarily productive tour of Maltby's company.⁷¹

That night the 1st Brigade relieved the 2nd. The incoming brigadier, General Lesslie, was dissatisfied with the number of patrols sent out by his battalions on the night of the relief, and ordered that small patrols must go out nightly to find enemy posts suitable to be attacked—the capture to be undertaken later by fighting patrols each of not less than a dozen men under an officer. Actually the first successful enterprise occurred in daylight, on the morning of May 22nd, when about 6.30 a sergeant of the 3rd Battalion, covered with mud, revolver in hand, tramped into the company headquarters of Capt. McDermid⁷² in the kitchen of "Paradise Inn"—one of some battered buildings on the Strazeele-Vieux Berquin road a quarter of a mile south of the Hazebrouck-Bailleul railway—and threw on the table in front of McDermid a handful of German identity discs. On being asked where he got them, he grunted that he had just taken them from a German post. He then tramped out. The

⁶⁹ Cpl. R. O. Allen (No. 1336; 5th Bn.). Jeweller and diamond setter; of Northcote, Vic.; b. Moreland, Vic., 17 June 1891.

⁷⁰ Pte. F. D. Maher, M.M. (No. 3363; 5th Bn.). Railway employee; of Richmond, Vic.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 5 June 1894.

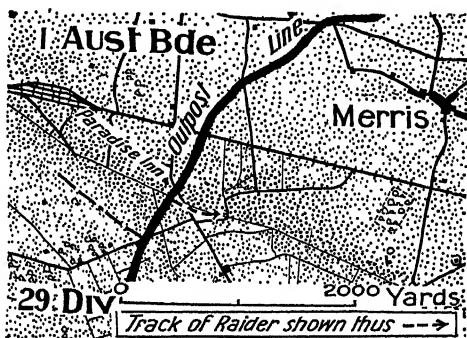
⁷¹ Farther south on the morning of the 18th a private, A. Hall (St. Kilda) of the 5th Bn., after locating an occupied post, had gone back and led out two of his mates to attack it. They killed one German, and the remainder fled, but Hall chased one and brought him back despite the fire of the neighbouring posts. He belonged to the 62nd I.R.

⁷² Capt. A. McDermid, 3rd Bn. Engineer; of Campsie, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 9 Nov. 1893.

sergeant, by name Bruggy,⁷³ was a man highly trusted by McDermid, who nevertheless, was uncertain what to believe, and asked the opinion of Coy. Sgt.-Maj. "Pat" Kinchington,⁷⁴ who was sitting beside him. Kinchington pointed out that the discs seemed to belong to men of more than one regiment, and moreover that they were stained as if by long exposure to the weather. Sensing that his account was doubted, Bruggy asked "if any one was game enough to go out with him again."

Kinchington took up the challenge and followed him, first down the Vieux Berquin road and then out crawling through the crops, which were now fairly high. After going some way, carefully parting the blades ahead of them to prevent a waving in the corn, they cut into a

track of disturbed crop, evidently made by Bruggy in his previous excursion, and, following this for a quarter of a mile closely parallel to a long ditch, came on some farm buildings near which was a trench. In this were several men lying motionless, two apparently dead, two wounded.⁷⁵ Two wounded men had crawled to the rear, their tracks being



marked with blood. Bruggy said that on his first appearance at the post he had shot one; as the others resisted he shot them also, and took their discs (they belonged to the 126th I.R., 39th Division). Bruggy and Kinchington returned by 8 o'clock. The story was so improbable that an airman was asked to photograph the position visited. His prints, delivered the same day, showed the track taken by the raiders, and confirmed a report which otherwise might well have been doubted even at battalion headquarters.

Only twice during this time did the 1st Division remark any serious attempts by the Germans to make similar captures:

Shortly after nightfall on May 8 they tried to raid Lt. Andersen's⁷⁶ post of the 12th Bn. looking down on Merris, but were detected and

⁷³ Lt. J. Bruggy, M.M.; 3rd Bn. Bricklayer; of Harden, N.S.W.; b. Glen Innes, N.S.W., 24 Feb. 1885.

⁷⁴ Lt. J. P. Kinchington, M.M.; 3rd Bn. Electric-tram driver; of Waverley, N.S.W.; b. Roma, Q'land, 24 Aug. 1884.

⁷⁵ One, under a galvanised roof at the end of the trench, was possibly feigning unconsciousness, for, when Kinchington put a hand on his shoulder, the German attacked him and was at once shot.

⁷⁶ Lt. A. D. Andersen, 12th Bn. Saw-mill manager; of Esk, Q'land; b. Esk, 21 Feb. 1892. Died 16 July 1926.

beaten off by the fire of flanking machine-guns and rifles and of the artillery. Again on the 19th, when a party of a dozen men of the 5th Bn. under Lt. Parker,⁷⁷ covered by a smaller party under Lt. Morrison,⁷⁸ was about to attack a German post at le Waton, it found itself faced by a body of the enemy—estimated at 70 strong—which split into three and advancing tried to outflank the leading party of Australians. Lt. Parker therefore retired on Morrison, and after firing on the Germans went forward again with three of his men to search the ground for some Germans believed to have been hit. The enemy, however, again tried to outflank the party, which Parker accordingly withdrew.⁷⁹

It is, of course, not to be assumed that on the Australian side all attempts succeeded, even when much less powerfully opposed than on this occasion. For all their resourcefulness the Diggers had to rely for success largely on bluff and partly on luck. Not infrequently they were seen when at a distance and stopped by machine-gun fire; and even when they succeeded in approaching a post unobserved, and then rushed it, if only one of the garrison acted boldly and promptly, the situation of the attackers might easily become precarious, even though they had usually taken the precaution of stationing a Lewis gunner at some distance to cover them—all depended upon which side showed most quickness and resource. There were a few serious reverses.

On the night of May 2 Lt. Forrester⁸⁰ (2nd Bn.) was mortally shot by the sentry in a German post which he had just located. On the 8th a small patrol ran into Germans on the little bridge over the Meteren stream and had a man badly wounded and two missing. On the night of the 10th, an order having been received that raids were to be carried out, Capt. McLeod,⁸¹ of the 12th, a veteran Scot whose right hand had been blown off when bombing at Lone Pine, decided if possible to avert the necessity. He obtained leave to reconnoitre his front, and, taking C. Sgt.-Maj. Sheedy⁸² and two others, went out nearly half a mile along the railway in the German forward zone seeking enemy to capture before he located a post near a farmhouse. The party was preparing to rush it when a machine-gun was turned on them. After replying with bombs and revolvers, McLeod and his sergeant-major got back, both wounded,

⁷⁷ Lt. T. S. Parker, 5th Bn. Engineering pattern maker; of Middle Park, Vic.; b. Albert Park, Vic., 29 June 1893.

⁷⁸ Lt. H. C. Morrison, 5th Bn. Manufacturer; of East Malvern, Vic.; b. Surrey Hills, Vic., 5 July 1889.

⁷⁹ A smaller hostile enterprise may have been attempted on May 7, when some Germans tried to approach a listening post of the 1st Bde. west of Meteren but were fired on and retired dragging with them a wounded man.

⁸⁰ Lt. J. A. Forrester, 2nd Bn. Marine engineer; of Footscray, Vic., and Annandale, N.S.W.; b. Footscray, 2 Jan. 1888. Killed in action, 2 May 1918.

⁸¹ Capt. D. McLeod, M.C.; 12th Bn. Miner; of W. Aust.; b. Tongue, Dornoch, Sutherlandshire, Scotland, 22 Sep. 1886. McLeod was a prospector. After the war, when in partnership with Capt. W. J. D. Lynas (16th Bn.), he fell down a shaft on 4 Dec. 1928 and was killed.

⁸² C. Sgt.-Maj. W. U. Sheedy (No. 361; 12th Bn.). Labourer; of Spreyton, Tas.; b. Waratah, Tas., 6 Dec. 1892. Died of wounds, 18 May 1918.



3. A SCENE OF MANY PATROL FIGHTS

Vaire and Hamel Woods from the Australian front line. The valley between is partly hidden. The main German line ran through the woods with outposts along the terraces in front.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E2679.
Taken on 3rd July, 1918.*

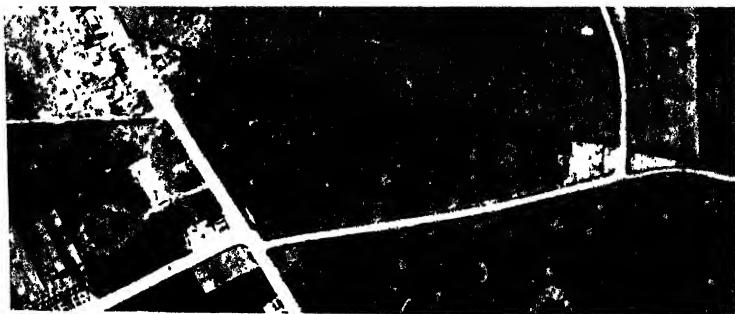
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4. VILLERS-BRETONNEUX

This view from the rear lines north-west of the village indicates the nature of the country around it. (One man has just been wounded by a shell. Two of his comrades wear civilian hats from the village. A third is sleeping under a salvaged parasol.)

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E4828.
Taken on 27th April, 1918.*



5A. Fields east of Vieux Berquin road, 21st May, 1918



5B. The same, May 22nd, showing Bruggy's tracks.

SERG. BRUGGY'S RAID, 22ND MAY, 1918

The track can be seen like a white thread from the road near Paradise Inn to the German post.

the latter mortally; the bodies of the two others were found long afterwards. On the night of May 12, a patrol of the 10th Bn. tried to surround a post of Germans near Merris but found them too alert; the patrol was met with bombs and machine-gun fire and forced to retire.⁸³ On the night of the 22nd a patrol of the 3rd Bn., under Lt. Baird,⁸⁴ while trying to discover the position of some German posts south of Merris, came under sharp fire and had to return with two men hit. Occasionally an accident brought failure. On May 2, for instance, when seeking a German to capture, Lt. Granville⁸⁵ (2nd Bn.) was wounded by the fire of an Australian post which, through the wounding of another man, had not been warned of his patrol.

But against the almost daily success of these operations such incidents passed almost unnoticed.

Undoubtedly peaceful penetration was greatly favoured by the policy then being initiated by the Germans—of leaving their inferior divisions to hold the trench-line against possible attacks by the Allies, and accumulating the better divisions in the back areas as the striking force for coming offensives. While the withdrawn divisions received rest, equipment, reinforcement, training, and every other assistance with a view to building a powerful "mass of manoeuvre," the trench divisions were forced to hold the line with little replenishment of men—and that little often comprising youths of barely nineteen years—with a lower establishment of horses for their artillery, and without hope of relief by other divisions unless their own exhaustion became so apparent to the higher command that their replacement had to be arranged in order to prevent danger of the front's collapsing. As early as May 12th the war diary of the 1st Australian Division notes that the prisoners of the 62nd I.R. taken in the fighting that followed Lieut. Gower's raid were "undoubtedly the poorest and most insignificant yet met by this Division," and the same conditions were noted on the Somme. The infantry of the trench divisions shrank until eventually in many cases companies mustered as few as fifty rifles—a result contributed to by the epidemic of influenza which, coming apparently from Spain, began at the end of

⁸³ The history of the 23rd I.R. says that on the night of May 13 a patrol of five attacked a post of the regiment near Merris and was beaten off, leaving a man of the 1st Aust. Div. killed. The reference may be to the same attack.

⁸⁴ Lt. J. R. Baird, M.C.; 3rd Bn. Cable operator; of Suva, Fiji, and Sydney; b. Port Macquarie, N.S.W., 17 Sep. 1892.

⁸⁵ Capt. E. L. Granville, and Bn. Schoolboy; of Sydney; b. Reading, Eng., 12 Feb. 1899. (Subsequently member of the House of Commons.)

May to sweep through the armies of both sides, the Germans, however, feeling the effects a little before the Allies.

During the period with which this chapter deals—from April 5th to about the third week in May—not all the shock divisions had been withdrawn,⁸⁶ and only the first cases of that epidemic had yet occurred; nevertheless even then the German line was mainly held by tired or second-rate divisions. On the Somme front the strain upon these troops was all the harder by reason of Ludendorff's policy which, at first, prohibited them from wiring and otherwise strengthening their front lines, since this would have given the Allies a sure sign that the "Michael" offensive was ended, whereas he wished to convey the opposite impression. The weak garrison in weak trenches was still disposed according to the system of defence laid down by Ludendorff for the German Army early in October, 1917, after the terrible lesson of Broodseinde:⁸⁷ that is to say, along the whole defensive front was drawn a "forward zone," held only by very light outpost forces, while the main line of resistance, at which any serious attack would be met, lay from 250 to 800 yards farther back. The thinly scattered posts in the forward zone had instructions to repel their opponents' patrols, but, on the approach of stronger forces, to fall back to the main line of resistance. There the forward battalion commander would fire a special coloured flare, and at this signal the German artillery would forthwith bring back its barrage to close in front of that line, which would thus present to the enemy, already disorganised by his advance, an obstacle too strong to be overcome without renewed and thorough preparation. Behind this line were the German support troops and, farther back, the reserves, ready to help in meeting the attack and, when it was held, to counter-attack and reoccupy the forward zone.

But the trench divisions were too weak to hold their line easily, in such great depth, against an active opponent. As the German front was "milked" for divisions to carry on the offensive, the trench divisions had to extend their already thin garrisons over the vacated sectors, which they could do only by placing all their regiments in the line. Each regiment would then make one of its battalions responsible for the forward

⁸⁶ For example, the German Jäger Division, which held the front at Monument Farm (Villers-Bretonneux) until May 17, was composed of first-rate aggressive troops.

⁸⁷ See Vol. IV, p. 881.

area, perhaps 1,000-1,200 yards wide and 400 deep, including the main line of resistance; the second battalion would lie in support and the third in rest and reserve. As the forward and support battalions had to supply their own ration and ammunition parties, not to mention those for digging and wiring the lines, the fighting garrison was further diminished. In the 10th R.I.R. (11th Reserve Division) at Merris at the end of April, for example, each front-line company held its forward line of, probably, 200-250 yards with only two light machine-guns or observation posts to throw back hostile patrols. On the Somme the forward line was usually held by pickets, with a screen of scattered groups (each a section strong) to cover them until a continuous line was dug, and with supports in rear. The sentry groups generally put out listeners, singly or in pairs, fifty yards ahead. Necessarily the groups, and still more the listeners, often felt themselves very much "in the air." In the early stage here described, peaceful penetration seldom went beyond them; and when, detecting an Australian patrol, they prudently treated its advance as "too powerful to be resisted," and the listeners ran back to the sentry groups and these to the picket, the effort to secure prisoners generally failed.

The results of peaceful penetration on the Somme and at Hazebrouck, remarkable though they were even at this stage, do not appear to have reached as yet the ears of the higher German command. The historians of several German regiments then serving on one or other of these fronts bitterly complain that, at a time when their positions were exceedingly difficult to hold and the local tension very great, the army staffs persisted in labelling the sectors as "quiet" and blaming the front-line troops for not devoting their spare energy to entrenching and wiring. But in shelling, bombing, and raiding the front-line troops were suffering trials of which the staffs did not dream. A German in the outpost-line in front of Morlancourt wrote on May 5:

"We have the Australians opposite us (200 metres away) and they are very quick and cunning. They glide about in the night like cats, and come right up to our trenches without our seeing them. Last night they were in our trenches and killed two men and dragged one away with them." But he adds: "The worst here are still the airmen against whom there is scarcely any means of protecting oneself."

The historian of the 247th R.I.R. Württembergers,⁸⁸ then in front of Ville-sur-Ancre, says: "The enemy infantry was far more active than before. Every day there occurred fights with 'English' patrols, which showed ever increasing keenness." After explaining that, in the Ancre flats, the German posts could not see one another, he says: "It was absolutely impossible to avoid one or another of them falling into the enemy's hands through the enterprises of the hostile patrols." "There

⁸⁸ Of the 54th Reserve Division.

lay opposite us," says another history,⁸⁹ "exceptionally good Australian troops, who kept us on tenterhooks with their all night activity."⁹⁰ Of the unofficial raids in front of Hazebrouck the regimental histories of the 12th Divn., which suffered so greatly from them, are silent.⁹¹ But in the middle of May the 81st Res. Divn. had to be brought back from rest and inserted into the line at the Meteren stream, where peaceful penetration had been worst, and the history of one of its regiments notes: "The fighting activity was lively in the extreme. . . . Also the enemy infantry tries, through constant attacks, to find out our position, and it almost always comes to little engagements which never allow our troops any rest." The history of the 23rd I.R. (12th Divn.) records the relief of its division on May 27⁹² with the words: "Our bloody tour in the line at Merris had found its end."

During May, many garrisons of front-line posts on both sides had been speculating, not without twinges of anxiety, as to the dangers that might arise when the crops became so high as to hide the view from their parapets. On May 22nd, after the visit of one of his staff to the reserve line, Maj.-General Walker of the 1st Division notes that the crops were already obscuring that line and that the position would be acute in a week. Down south in the Somme area the same anxiety was being felt.

The wheat is growing so high as to present a problem (says the diary of an Australian on June 2). It is only so in patches, but there are patches in which you cannot see twenty yards through it, and where the German front line is only 100 yards away. We are putting out wire, but it is difficult. The German has concertina-wire⁹³ out.

A German attack on a large scale was expected about May 25th, and on that date in the 1st Australian Division preparations began for the cutting of the crops. Three days later an order was issued that reaping hooks should be used to mow them down in front of outpost and support trenches,⁹⁴ so that the posts would have a clear view at least as far as their own wire-entanglements and, if possible, beyond. To screen men looking over the parapet a thin belt of crop, two feet wide, was to be left.

⁸⁹ That of the 27th R.I.R., 54th Div., which held the line in front of Morlancourt later in May.

⁹⁰ On the other hand the sector immediately north of the Somme at Saily-Laurette and, in less degree, that immediately south of it are described in several German regimental histories as being at this period "quiet" so far as the opposing infantry was concerned.

⁹¹ The history of the 62nd I.R. mentions only the planned raid by Lt. Gower's party of the 9th Bn. on the night of May 10-11.

⁹² By the 13th Res. Div.

⁹³ That is, continuous coils of unbarbed wire, easily and quickly stretched—otherwise called "French wire" or (by the Germans) "schnell-draht" (quickly laid wire).

⁹⁴ In the reserve line this was to be done by easier means and to greater depth.

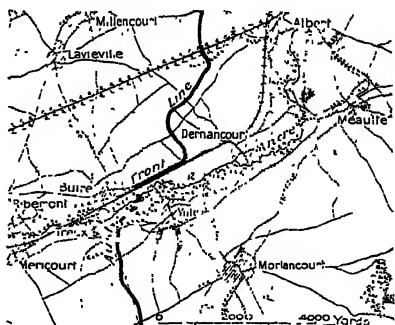
CHAPTER III

THE AUSTRALIANS AT MORLANCOURT HIT BACK

IN the valley of the Ancre, around the village of Ville, peaceful penetration presently led to formal operations punctuating the prevailing quiet on the Western Front.

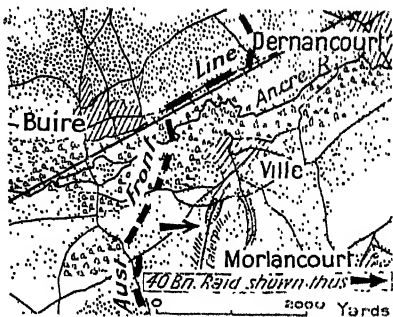
The Ancre, a small brimming stream, about twenty feet wide, flows here through meadows deep in rich grass around the foot of the bare Laviéville promontory, skirting sometimes the foot of the hills that screen Morlancourt, sometimes the bottom of the opposing Laviéville slope around which, with a long northward curve, runs the railway to Albert. Thus the flats, some half-mile wide, lie at one part on the northern, at another on the southern, side of the stream. Dernancourt village, then three-quarters of a mile behind the German line, is on the northern side.

Ville, a mile farther down the stream, just before it ran into the Australian line at Buire, was then also German. It lay near the southern bank, on a low semi-circular shelf of the flats which raised it conveniently above the lower level of marshy ground and water. Its houses were still standing, though many were holed by shells; and the tall trees, which stood thickly in long rows radiating curiously from the north-west corner of the village, hid most of the houses behind them although these were barely 600 yards from the nearest Australian posts. Brimming ditches, and numerous expanses of shallow water where the peat had been dug, made the flats



difficult to cross without wide détours. The Germans, to give access to their foothold west of the stream between Ville and Albert, had placed sixty-three footbridges and about a dozen traffic bridges across that section of it, besides the regular bridges at Dernancourt, Vivier Mill, and Albert. Morlancourt lay a mile south of the Ancre, hidden in a deep pan in the high tongue between that river and the Somme, its valley communicating (as if by the handle of the pan) with the Ancre just behind Ville.

The line of the 3rd Australian Division across the peninsula between Somme and Ancre—a front of 7,000 yards—had been practically unchanged since General Monash carried out his rather expensive advance on March 28th and the Germans their much more costly attack above Sailly-Laurette on the 30th. During the whole of April Monash's left brigade, the 10th (Brig.-Genl. McNicoll), held the flats between Ville and Buire and the bare slope of the ridge that rose south of them; and while the patrols of the 11th Brigade (Cannan), on the summit and slopes of this peninsula, were making the series of successful excursions recorded in the last chapter, the 10th also was ordered to secure the necessary identification. From the 40th Battalion, in front of Buire, several officers' patrols went out on the night of April 18th to find a German post suitable for raiding. Lieut. Stebbins,¹ working for 1,000 yards along the southern edge of the flats, found one on the side of a sunken road (afterwards known, from its shape on the map, as the "Little Caterpillar") leading down to Ville. As he and his men or some other party would otherwise almost certainly have to raid next day, Stebbins decided to seize the post there and then. He was about to do so when behind him there passed a

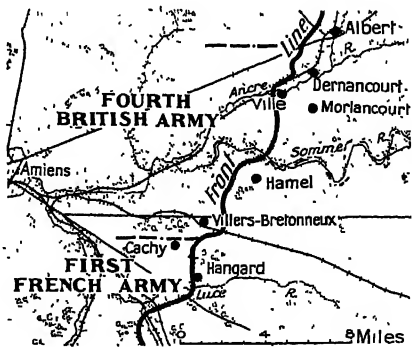


¹ Lt. S. G. Stebbins, M.C.; 40th Bn. Grocer; of Zeehan, Tas.; b. Ulverstone, Tas., 19 Jan. 1896.

German patrol, going its round unaware of him. It halted and settled into shell-holes thirty yards behind him. He decided to attack it, and, with his sergeant, A. H. Richards,² was leading the approach, when the Germans called "Hands up." Stebbins shot one, Richards another; Pte. Brilliant³ bayoneted two—in all two were killed and three badly wounded. One of the dead men was then carried back to the Australian lines, and proved to belong to the 231st R.I.R. (50th Reserve Division).

There is no reference to this raid in the available German records. On the other hand the history of the 247th R.I.R., which then held the line in front of Ville, immediately north of this slope, tells of a German raid undertaken about this time while the Germans were attempting to locate the Australian posts in the Ancre valley. One was found near a derelict British tank beside the road to Treux. "The following night the keen Company Sergeant-Major Röhner tried to cut it out. He annihilated the post with hand-grenades," says the account, "but could not take any 'Englishman' prisoner." (The patrol's report as to annihilation was inaccurate, for the incident is not mentioned, as it certainly would have been, in the 10th Bde.'s records.)

The Germans at Ville were occupying a pronounced salient. In front of Amiens the great German thrust had left, not a clean-cut wedge in the Allies' line, but a series of protruding steps, at Ville, Hamel, Cachy, and again south of the Luce. Had it not been for the trees that screened it, the Ville salient would have been most uncomfortable for the Germans to hold. As it was, they had so far remained in comparative peace except for the nightly bombings and the harassing shell-fire.



On April 22nd the 5th and 3rd Australian Divisions extended their flanks northwards across the Somme and Ancre respec-

² Sgt. A. H. Richards, M.M. (No. 1964; 40th Bn.). Farmer; of Wilmot, Tas.; b. Caveside, Tas., 8 July 1895. Died of wounds, 18 July 1918.

³ Sgt. J. D. Brilliant, M.M. (No. 7438; 40th Bn.). Mechanic; of Canberra, A.C.T.; b. Brunswick, Vic., 29 Mar. 1897.

tively, this having been ordered so that, in accordance with a tried military rule, both banks of each stream should be held by the same formation, whose commander in each case would see to it that action taken on one bank conformed with that taken on the other. As part of this change, on April 23rd the 10th Brigade took over the protruding sector north of the river and railway, previously held by part of the 7th Brigade (2nd Division). The leaders of the 10th Brigade, now controlling both sides of the stream, at once began to see what advantages could be obtained by working along it. In the small hours of April 25th Capt. Fairweather, a famous raider, and a patrol of twelve men of the 38th Battalion saw in the moonlight Germans entering and leaving a hut far out along the northern bank. Apparently they reached it by a footbridge. Fairweather had crept to within fifty yards, and was about to raid the place, when other Germans arrived, and from a trench in front of the hut flares shot up and bombs were thrown. A German patrol was also seen moving north of the place. Fairweather concluded that it was too strong for his party to attack, and withdrew the patrol.

But action here was overdue. The line of the 10th Brigade south of the Ancre, was nearly a mile farther back than that north of it, and was also somewhat behind the alignment of the posts farther south.⁴ Lieut.-Col. A. R. Woolcock of the 42nd (Q'land) Battalion, 11th Brigade, on the right asked that the 10th Brigade's posts in the Ancre valley should be advanced--in front of Treux the enemy posts were 1,000 yards away. Brig.-Genl. McNicoll at once agreed. It was planned that the hut north of the river should be attacked that night, April 28th, by a larger party, and on following nights the brigade would successively advance, first its posts north of the river, and next those south of it.

⁴ On the night of April 27 the 41st Bn. (11th Bde.) on the summit had renewed its capture of prisoners by raiding a listening post immediately in front of the German line north of the Bray-Corbie road. There was a bright moon, and the artillery fire covering the raid alarmed the enemy posts, which were very active, but, in the face of bombs and machine-gun fire from the line beyond, the post was rushed. A German was killed, and another (of the 229th R.I.R., 50th Res. Div.) captured. Of 17 Queenslanders one was killed and two wounded. They were led by Lt. S. L. Robinson (to be distinguished from Lt. G. S. H. Robinson of the same battalion, who was killed three days earlier in the shelling that accompanied the enemy's attack on Villers-Bretonneux). This prisoner, and others at this time, spoke of the presence of German tanks in the neighbourhood of Morlancourt.

The raid on the hut was made by two parties each of seventeen men of the 40th Battalion⁵ under Lieuts. Cranswick and A. P. Brown respectively. These crawled out and lay up fifty yards on either flank of the post. On a signal from Cranswick ten grenadiers each fired one bomb into the enemy and each Lewis gunner rattled off a drum of ammunition. Both parties then charged. They found hut and trench empty, but in the scooped-out shelters, in which candles were still burning, one German was captured. Others were found, but it was reported that they tried to escape and were therefore shot. German machine-guns beyond the river opened but were suppressed by the Lewis gunners and rifle-grenadiers and the crew of a supporting machine-gun, and the party brought back its prisoner without suffering a casualty.



The history of the 247th R.I.R. (whose II Bn. then held the Ville front with three companies in line and a fourth in support behind the town) says that the post attacked formed the north flank of its centre company. It was held by a platoon under Sgt. Donner, and, being across the river, was recognised as difficult to defend. On the "raven-black" night of April 28 "about 25 men (says the narrative) fell on Sgt. Donner's platoon. The platoon commander defended himself manfully against the superior numbers, but, when the enemy got in, he had to retire to a flank. One of the riflemen, who had already been seized, managed to break away. Then the company commander (Lt. Würth), receiving word, attacked with his supports. On this the 'English' withdrew." Würth then found that one of his men, believed to have been wounded, was missing.

The Victorians noted that the morale of these Württembergers of the 54th Res. Divn. was high. One of its sergeants, captured by a patrol of the 40th Bn. on the night of April 30, would give no information, and the attitude of other prisoners was manly.

At dusk on the following night (April 29th-30th) Lieut. Brown with a patrol went out again to this post, which had just been shelled by field-howitzers, but found it empty. Soon afterwards Germans tried to approach it but were driven off.

The history of the 247th R.I.R. says that as soon as the place was

⁵ The 40th had just relieved the 38th north of the Ancre. Its right was astride of the river.

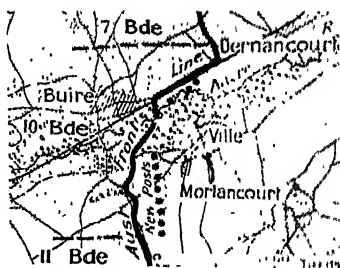
bombarded Lt. Würth "realised what was up," and withdrew his platoon across the Ancre, and from there opened fire on the "English" patrol.⁶ "A wild fire-fight followed at ten yards' range." It is claimed that when the Germans threw bombs their opponents withdrew and Würth's company occupied the position.

Meanwhile, at dark, parties of the 40th Battalion advanced, and during the night, under cover of diverting bombardments and barrages thrown, as if for raiding—by the 6th (Army) Brigade, A.F.A.—on the road and German posts south of Ville and by the 3rd (Army) Brigade on Dernancourt, dug a new line of posts north-east of the hut, between railway and river.

This is not mentioned in the history of the 247th R.I.R., possibly because that regiment immediately afterwards was shifted north of the Ancre, another division, the 199th, taking over the Ville sector.

On the night of April 30th Cranswick and Brown again went out to blow up the bridge, a fallen tree, by which the Germans crossed to the hut. This time the Germans replied to the Tasmanian rifle-grenadiers with the same weapon. After five minutes' artillery bombardment, the position was rushed but found empty. Two Tasmanians were killed by machine-gun fire, but a sergeant and two sappers blew up the bridge and the Germans never again occupied the post.

This night the advance began south of Ville also, patrols of the 37th working across the open gully which separated the 10th Brigade's outposts from the last big spur screening Morlancourt, and choosing suitable positions in which to dig a line of advanced posts the next night.⁷ At dusk on May 1st digging parties went out and after a night's work behind a covering party the new posts, on the near side of the spur 400-700 yards ahead of the old



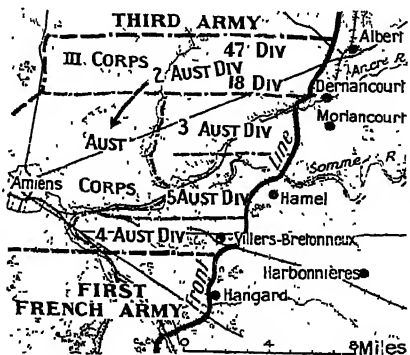
⁶ The German historian suspects that this visit was due to their opponents having "apparently squeezed all sorts of information from the prisoner taken on the previous night."

⁷ At the same time the 41st Bn. on top of the ridge made another raid, led by Lt. J. B. Lawson (Townsville, Q'land), but found the German sentry groups too quick in withdrawing; as soon as the patrol was seen, the sentries would give three low whistles and the groups at once retired on their pickets.

line, were left lightly garrisoned. The digging was completed on the night of May 2nd by help of a company of the divisional pioneers. Thus for a mile south of the Ancre and for a quarter of a mile north of it, a considerable advance had been achieved almost without loss.

At this stage there took place a complete reorganisation of the Fourth Army's front. It will be remembered that in the third week of April this front had, by Sir Douglas Haig's decision, been divided between two corps⁸—the Australian Corps to be made responsible for the defence of the Somme River, the III Corps for that of Villers-Bretonneux plateau. But after the blow struck at the III Corps on April 24th it was taken out of the line, to be reinserted a week later north of the Ancre, while the Australian now became the southern corps of the army and of the British forces in France, with an increased responsibility—for the defence of both rivers and, with the French, of the Villers-Bretonneux plateau. To make this change possible—the flank of the northern division of the Australian Corps, the 2nd, was for a few days extended farther northwards to face Albert, and then, on May 2nd, this division was relieved by the 47th (London) and moved into reserve. On May 6th the 18th (Eastern) Division took over the southern half of the 47th's front, and III Corps Headquarters assumed control of both these divisions.⁹

The Australian Corps held its now shortened line with three divisions—the 4th in front of Villers-Bretonneux, the 5th astride of the Somme, the 3rd from 1,200 yards south of the Bray-Corbie road to a



⁸ See Vol. V, pp. 535-6.

⁹ Headquarters of III Corps moved to Villers Bocage, and that of Australian Corps to Bertangles.

point half a mile north of the Ancre, between Ville and Dernancourt. At the same time the 3rd Division relieved its 11th (Outer States) Brigade, which, since the arrival of the Australians, had held the summit of the peninsula, by the 9th (New South Wales), which had been given a fortnight's rest since its return from Villers-Bretonneux. This was one of the three Australian infantry brigades which, owing to heavy fighting in the German Michael offensive and shortage of reinforcements from home, had been reduced to a three-battalion establishment.¹⁰ It was to place two battalions in the line and the third in support; for security, General Monash kept a battalion (43rd) of the outgoing 11th Brigade in close reserve to it. The 10th Brigade still held the line in the Ancre valley.

On April 29th Brig.-Genl. Rosenthal, the stalwart commander of the 9th Brigade, taking advantage of a particularly misty morning, walked round the whole out-
9th Brigade's task post-line to be taken over by his troops. He was impressed by the fact that although the position of the main line of defence, back in the old French line on the height above Sully-le-Sac, had proved, in the March fighting an excellent one, the outposts of his right flank were in a difficult, isolated position, down the forward slope of the valley in which the 41st Battalion had so successfully played with the enemy sentry groups. Here the sunken roads and their hedges and, near the top, two copses, might screen an assembling German attack. Rosenthal accordingly decided to seize for his outposts the farther slope of the valley.¹¹ General Monash entirely agreed with the project. The 34th Battalion, going in on the southern half of the brigade's front, was ordered to carry it out.

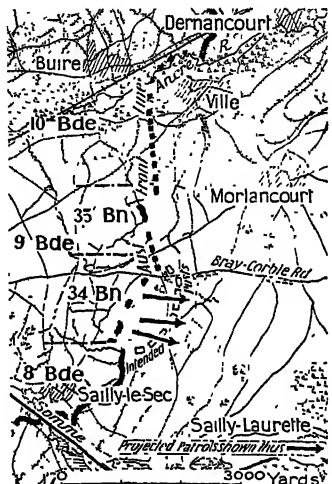
Upon the 34th and 35th Battalions' taking over the brigade's sector, their patrols, scouring the area ahead on the nights of May 1st and 2nd, met not one German. South of the Bray-Corbie road were found only the little empty trenches and abandoned wire-entanglements of the posts so thoroughly har-

¹⁰ All British brigades of the B.E.F. had been thus reduced, but no dominion ones except the 9th, 12th, and 13th Aust. These had been cut down by the disbandment of the 36th, 47th and 52nd Bns. (See Vol. V, pp. 657-9.)

¹¹ Br.-Gen. Cannan of the 11th Bde. informed him that he himself would have taken this step in the near future.

ried by the 11th Brigade. Apparently the Germans here were now holding only their main line behind these. Even where their front posts were still held—on the plateau north of the road, in front of the 35th—during the first five nights not a German patrol was encountered. It appeared therefore that the task of the 34th would be easy, although north of the road the enemy's line of posts, which was unattacked, was practically in alignment with the objective south of the road. It was accordingly arranged that the ground should be quietly stolen, without artillery support, on the night of May 4th. First, three strong patrols would lead off at 9 o'clock¹² across the valley and scour the opposite slope; behind them would advance a company extended as a screen to protect the digging parties; following the screen would come a company of the 3rd Pioneer Battalion to dig the new posts, and 10 officers and 210 men of the support battalion—the 33rd—to erect wire-entanglement before the posts. On the left, near the Bray-Corbie road, a post would be thrown back to link with the 35th. That battalion would clear from its own front a couple of advanced German posts.

But even this operation, together with that of the 10th Brigade, would advance the 3rd Division's front only to the nearer edge of the cross-spur which was to have been captured by General Monash's advance on March 28th.¹³ Most of the line would have to be pushed 1,000 yards farther before the troops could achieve the object originally aimed at—to restrict the enemy's view and themselves look down into the Morlancourt pan. Monash and Birdwood were keen that this should be done. At the moment it was also most desirable to strike



¹² Eight o'clock true time—half an hour after sunset.

¹³ See Vol. V., p. 214 and sketch on p. 216.

the enemy wherever possible, a duty entirely congenial to Rosenthal. It was decided that, on the night after the 34th's stealing of ground, a formal advance should be made by the 35th on the plateau, the troops on each slope safeguarding the flanks of this attack by moving forward their own flanks.

On the night of May 3rd patrols of the 34th Battalion found Germans again occupying three posts on the slope which would be the objective of the next night's silent advance. Farther back other Germans were entrenching, and it was hoped that the posts were only temporarily garrisoned to cover the digging. No German was captured—incidentally this was the third day on which, in spite of General Monash's insistent demand for prisoners, the 9th Brigade had failed to get one. But in this area the enemy seemed shy of patrolling. Early on the previous morning two of his officers had been seen on the Bray-Corbie road, trying to gain a view of the country through field-glasses. One was forthwith shot, and was picked up afterwards by German stretcher-bearers; the other crawled away. That night, down near the Ancres flats on the left, Lieut. Philip¹⁴ of the 37th Battalion (10th Brigade) with seventeen men in a very bold raid¹⁵ brought back two prisoners, both of whom fought hard. One was wounded, but the other continued to struggle and could be dragged along only by pricking him with a bayonet. They were found to belong to the 199th Division, then replacing the 54th Reserve at Ville.

Next morning, May 4th, rain fell heavily, and that night the 34th Battalion made its advance. The three patrols scoured the further slope of the valley, searched the two copses once held by the Germans at the head of it and the cemeteries and old German outpost-trenches on the Treux-Sailly-Laurette

¹⁴ Lt. W. S. Philip, M.C.; 37th Bn. Public accountant; of Williamstown, Vic.; b. Williamstown, 18 Aug. 1891.

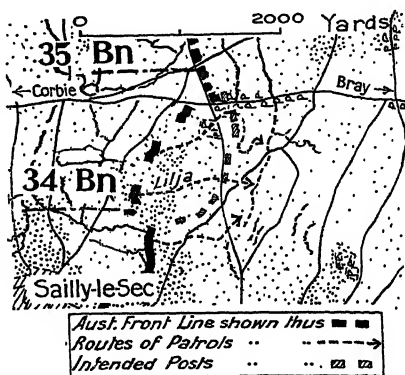
¹⁵ The post raided was a listening post previously discovered by Philip and a scout, Pte. P. H. McCabe (Alexandria, N.S.W.), a hundred yards in advance of the German outposts along the "Little Caterpillar" road, south of Ville. The artillery—6th Bde., A.F.A.—assisted, disguising its fire as the normal nightly harassing fire. (At 1 o'clock eighteen rounds were fired at the post, and at 1.30 for twenty minutes other targets about it were fairly heavily shelled.) Under cover of the disturbance the patrol approached the post on the Morlancourt knuckle. After five minutes' bombardment, however, the enemy's suspicions were aroused. A flare shot up and two machine-guns opened from the road. The raiders, lying ready in two parties, immediately charged the post. Both Philip and his sergeant, P. D. Hazzard (Essendon, Vic.), were wounded as they led the rush. The two Germans in the listening post were captured.

road, but found no enemy. The patrols then lay up very close to the enemy's front line; so close, indeed, was Lieut. Lilja's¹⁶ patrol at the thick wire-entanglement of a German strong-post, that one of his men, who could speak German, spent the time translating to his young officer the conversation of the Germans in their trench. Behind them the platoon commanders of the 34th marked out the sites of the eight new posts.

The operations on this and the three ensuing nights, undertaken at first with the utmost confidence by all concerned, were attended throughout by one extraordinary difficulty. The wide cross-

spur that faced the attack was, like the summit along which ran the Bray-Corbie road, covered only by open crops less than a foot high, with hardly a landmark, so that even by day, with map and field-glasses, any particular post was hard to locate. But in the intensely dark nights then prevailing the difficulty of keeping direction when moving over the contours, here steeply, there gently graded, turned the final undertakings there, at least for the attacking troops, into operations of night-marish anxiety.

Strangely enough, one of the first to experience this difficulty was General Rosenthal himself. The companies had just moved out on the first night when there were noted on the right the stout form and hearty voice of the brigadier. With Lieut.-Col. White of the 33rd, a New South Wales sheep-farmer, and Maj. Dunlop,¹⁷ acting brigade-major, he went northwards along the intended line of the posts, checking their positions. South

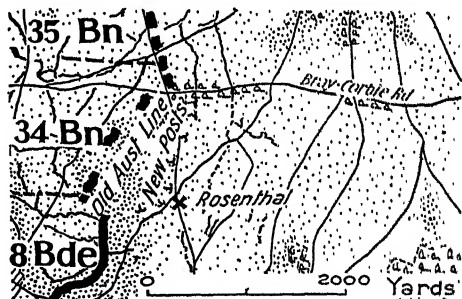


¹⁶ Lt. H. W. Lilja, 34th Bn. Accountant; of Chatswood, N.S.W.; b. Chatswood, 21 June 1894.

¹⁷ Maj. W. A. S. Dunlop, 4th L.H. Regt., Actg. Bde.-Maj. 9th Inf. Bde., 1917-18. Duntroon graduate; b. Holywood, Co. Down, Ireland, 30 June 1892.

of the Bray-Corbie road Lieut. Baillie,¹⁸ on finding himself practically level with the German posts north of the road, had taped out two posts somewhat short of that alignment, immediately in front of the copse and quarry at the head of the valley. Rosenthal directed him to move the tapes 150 yards forward, despite a protest that the post would then be beyond the German flank. Seeing that it would be hopeless for the wiring parties to find the chosen sites without guiding marks, White arranged for guides from the pioneers to lay a white tape to each. While this was being done Rosenthal, who had just been discussing the dearth of prisoners, suggested to White that they should see if they could get one.

They accordingly moved out, revolvers in hand, through the covering party, and presently came upon the corpse of a German whom Rosenthal, flashing his electric torch upon the body as he knelt, judged to have been recently killed. "They can't see through me!" he laughed, when White remonstrated at this foolhardiness. Returning with the dead



man's shoulder strap for identification,¹⁹ the party went on southwards, checking the positions of the digging and wiring parties. Near the southern end of the sector a subaltern had placed his post too close to the tape for the wire. The brigadier and his party moved this tape forward and were pegging it down when six men came towards them from the rear. At a few yards' distance it was seen, from the shape of their helmets silhouetted against the sky, that they were German. Rosenthal and White ordered them to halt, but, though unarmed, they tried to run. White had to shoot one through

¹⁸ Lt. A. Baillie, 34th Bn. Law clerk; of Cessnock, N.S.W.; b. Wallsend, N.S.W., 28 Aug. 1898.

¹⁹ It showed the German to belong to the 31st I.R., which had been relieved on April 18. It was, however, recalled about May 9 (See p. 93), and this man may have been concerned with the coming relief.

the leg and Rosenthal another, and both Australians to seize and muffle them, before they could be stopped from giving the alarm. Five were captured. Lilja's patrol out by the German strong-post heard the shots and throttled cry, and the Germans in the main line immediately opened fire so sharply that the nearer parties of Australians were forced to lie very low.

Having had the wounded Germans attended to, Rosenthal started to return to headquarters. At once a subaltern warned him that he was walking towards the German line. "Nonsense, boy—I was soldiering before you were born!" said the general as he pushed on. But he had gone a very short way, when a German flare shot up not far ahead, and saved for the A.I.F. one of its best leaders.²⁰

Meanwhile Col. White checking the posts had found several astray and some wiring parties missing.²¹ He tried to redistribute his men and get on with the work, but some had lost their way and never arrived, and others, clogged in the sodden fields, were late. It was then near daylight and high time to get the front clear of men, and little wire was, therefore, erected. But seven of the posts had been placed where intended; the digging and wiring parties withdrew, and the company under Capt. Beaver,²² which had formed the covering line, now fell back and garrisoned the posts.

Meanwhile, in the sector of the 35th Battalion, of the two

²⁰ The wounded Germans were attended to in the sunken Sully-Laurette-Treux road. They proved to be an unarmed party of the 114th I.R. (199th Div.) sent to fetch the rations, and, as so often happened in that sector, had completely lost their way. The sixth German ran into some Australians and was also captured. It was well that Rosenthal's sturdy figure was so easy to recognise. At that moment the Lewis gunner of Lilja's patrol, out in front, having heard Germans in rear and now seeing someone moving there, had covered him with his gun when the flare showed that familiar outline.

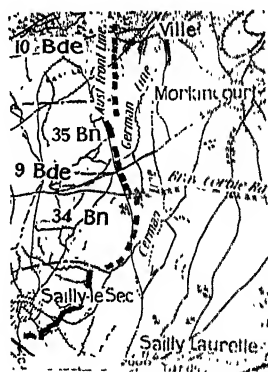
²¹ He and his messenger were following one of the tapes near the Bray-Corbie road when a German voice challenged him. The two Australians crouched low and, as the tape had evidently been laid there in error, crept back, rolling it up as they went, so that no other party should be misled by it. Of the men wiring in that sector there was no sign. (Afterwards it was learned that the parties here had come under heavy fire by which a man in the covering patrol was hit, and the working party had then dug another post 200 yards farther back.) Going thence to the northernmost tape, White found that the man laying this, too, had entirely missed direction; it ran north, across the road, and at its end a party of the 33rd was erecting wire immediately in front of the German front-line post. White quietly passed word to withdraw, and, as the last man left, the German post opened with a machine-gun, the bullets striking showers of sparks from the abandoned corkscrew pickets.

²² Capt. E. Beaver, M.C.; 34th Bn. University student; of Ashfield, N.S.W.; b. Ashfield, 25 Sep. 1891.

parties that were to suppress advanced enemy posts, one discovered that the nearest post was in the enemy main front line, behind wire; the other found the advanced trench empty. Thus by a second almost costless advance (this time, of 400-1,000 yards on a front of 1,500) the right of the 3rd Division had been established on the cross-spur north of Saily-Laurette, practically in extension of the German outpost-line north of the road. It remained to capture, by a formal attack on the following night, the German first and second lines on the summit.

In the five weeks since their advance had been stopped, the Germans had done little to fortify this front, especially on the slopes to the Ancre and Somme which were open to their opponents' view. At first, as has already been mentioned,²³ the fortifying of the front lines had been expressly prohibited by Ludendorff. Moreover the German troops themselves, encouraged to believe that their advance would soon recommence, were disinclined to waste unnecessary effort in fortification. In addition, the British artillery and air-bombing—and, especially on this front, the sniping and patrolling—were deliberately designed to prevent the work. Thus at the end of April the German front here was still largely open. It was not until May 3rd that photographs by the corps air squadron²⁴ showed that across the 1,500 yards of plateau north of the Bray-Corbie road they had connected their previously isolated outposts into a continuous trench, while their second trench-line, 300-400 yards behind it, had now also taken shape as a trench, curiously straight and much longer, since it extended 1,500 yards south of the Bray-Corbie road, guarding the summit of the cross-spur

**Morlancourt,
May 5th-6th**

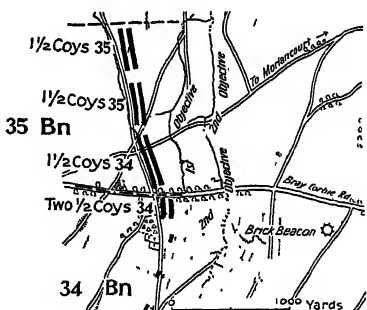


²³ See p. 58.

²⁴ No. 3 Squadron, A.F.C.

above Sailly-Laurette. Now that the 34th Battalion had filched the old German forward position there, this extension of the second position furnished the only continuous line ahead of that battalion; but Rosenthal, seeing on May 5th the first air-photographs showing the two trenches north of the road, noted that the 35th Battalion's task there would be more difficult than had been anticipated.

The 35th's outpost-line lay generally along the Sailly-Laurette-Treux road, 200-400 yards from the German front. The attack, like most of those made this year, would be delivered by very light forces—quite differently from the assaults at Ypres or Pozières. The plateau north of the road was 1,500 yards wide. On the northern 1,000 yards of front the 35th Battalion would attack with two companies in first line and two half-companies in second line.²⁵ On the 500 yards immediately north of the Bray-Corbie road, the attack would be made by a company and a half of the 34th similarly disposed (as shown in the marginal sketch). All these troops would assemble after dark behind a tape 100 yards ahead of the Sailly-Laurette-Treux road. Behind the second wave would come two Stokes mortars and three machine-guns, two large parties of the 33rd Battalion carrying wire, tools, and ammunition, and a company of the 3rd Pioneer Battalion to dig eight T-head posts east of the final position. The artillery barrage²⁶ would fall at 11.45—shortly before moonrise—on the German front line and three minutes later would advance, the first wave of infantry passing on with it over the first German trench, which would be left for the second wave to clear. The second trench would be reached and captured at 12.1 a.m., the second wave coming on later to help with the digging, wiring, and barricading of flanks. Until at least 12.45, con-



²⁵ The fourth company of the 35th formed the reserve.

²⁶ Thrown by the 3rd and 6th Bdes., A.F.A., and the 108th, 150th, and 189th Bdes., R.F.A.

solidation would be covered by a lighter "protective" barrage of shell-fire, and massed machine-guns of the 10th and 23rd Companies would for three-quarters of an hour spray the near edge of Morlancourt.

But south of the Bray-Corbie road also part of the second German trench (here the front line) would have to be seized, for here lay the highest point of the cross-spur—indeed the summit for 1,000 yards east of it (known as the "Brick Beacon") was the highest ground for three miles ahead of the Australian lines. Accordingly, two more half-companies of the 34th would capture and barricade off 200 yards of the trench south of the road, on the western end of this summit. The pioneers would dig T-heads there also. The other flank, on the Ancre slope, would be protected by a post to be established by the 39th Battalion. As the main task lay with the 35th, Rosenthal, following the principle previously adopted by him at Villers-Bretonneux, entrusted the conduct of the main operation—that north of the road—to Lieut.-Col. Goddard of that battalion, and, to allow Goddard to devote all his troops to the task, arranged for his present line to be taken over just before zero hour by two companies of the 33rd. After the battle the troops who had made the attack would be almost immediately relieved and they were accordingly told to leave their greatcoats.

Early on May 5th the field artillery shelled the German trench south of the road. Heavy and field artillery shelled Morlancourt from 5 until 6 p.m. and the roads south of it from 7 till 10. Light rain falling during the afternoon made the fields very heavy for going, and, though at dusk the sky cleared, the first half of the night was intensely dark. The preliminary movements, however, went without hitch except near the Bray-Corbie road, where the troops, as usual, had extraordinary difficulty in finding their way.²⁷

²⁷ Here during the assembly Lt. Nicklin of the 34th could find no trace of his platoon, whose right flank should have been on that road. With his sergeant, E. H. Regan (Narromine, N.S.W.), he went ahead searching for them along the edge of the road until Regan almost walked into the German front line, creating a stir among its garrison. Under fire at close range, the two Australians managed to get back by rushes without, however, gaining a sight of their platoon. Meanwhile, however, Lt. Lilja and other officers of the same company had found a number of its men lying beside the Bray-Corbie road, facing south instead of east. They had faced them hurriedly in the right direction when the barrage fell. The troops moved off, plainly silhouetted against the shell-flashes, and Nicklin at once found his platoon.

The barrage fell densely, and fairly upon the German front line. On most of the front of the 35th and of the attached company of the 34th (under Capt. Cains²⁸) the advance went smoothly. Maj. Carr, commanding the centre, had lined out his men at seven yards' interval, so that each could just see the next in the dark. They advanced in excellent line, too close to the barrage for the Germans to have much chance of opposition, and at the first trench—a fairly good one—they found its very young garrison in most parts still cowering on the floor. At a few points rifles and machine-guns began to fire. Near the Bray-Corbie road a German machine-gunner pinned part of the 34th for a moment to the ground; but a Lewis gunner of Lilja's platoon, L.-Corpl. Morgan,²⁹ quickly fired on the gun, enabling the platoon to work round and rush it. Another post was rushed by Sergt. Smedley.³⁰ The first wave was too thin to capture all parts of the German front line. After it had leapt in and out and passed on, lengths of the trench were still occupied by Germans, and Carr and his signallers, making their way along it to their pre-appointed headquarters, passed numbers of crouching boys. Even the pioneers, who left Goddard's headquarters after midnight, and carrying parties of the 33rd found parts of the German front-line garrison still untouched.

Meanwhile, on most of the 35th's front the first wave had gone on and quickly reached the second trench, which, to their surprise, they found to be unfinished and, in most parts, unused. In some parts of it, indeed, the sods had barely been turned; most of it was but two feet deep and the rain had collected along it in pools which the men's feet quickly churned to liquid mud. Here again near the road the 34th rushed a machine-gun and a bombing post,³¹ but for 1,000 yards north of this the objective was captured almost without resistance. Covering parties were sent to lie out ahead while the troops deepened the trench and the pioneers began their T-heads. The early return of 70 prisoners to battalion headquarters confirmed the reports

²⁸ Capt. N. S. Cains, M.C.; 34th Bn. Draughtsman; of Waverley, N.S.W.; b. Waverley, 12 Aug. 1893.

²⁹ Cpl. G. E. Morgan, M.M. (No. 499; 34th Bn.). Carpenter, of Kurri Kurri, N.S.W.; b. Minmi, N.S.W., 23 Oct. 1893.

³⁰ Lt. L. T. Smedley, M.M.; 34th Bn. Bushworker; of Berringama, Vic.; b. Corryong, Vic., 21 Jan. 1890

³¹ Lt. Lilja and Sgt. Smedley were prominent in this also.

and, as no improvement would be possible during the day, the garrisons must simply sit there and hold on. At day-break some of the new posts found that they could see into parts of the Morlancourt pan. Germans, not recovered from the loss of their trench-line, were wandering about, and the Lewis gunners chased them with streams of bullets. A thousand yards ahead, beside the Corbie-Bray road, a battery of German field-guns was visible, and Rosenthal, eager as ever, suggested to General White that the troop of light horse attached to the brigade should be "allowed to have a go at it"—a proposal which, needless to say, was rejected. During May 6th it was possible to walk up to parts of the front line by day; but on the left the position was poor. There the Morlancourt pan lay very close, but it was impossible to see into it; for, intervening between the left of the 35th and the outposts of the 30th Battalion (10th Brigade) was the strong German post at the uncaptured communication trench.

South of the Bray road, according to first reports, the two half-companies of the 34th had met with equal success. Actually this small attack was unfinished, and it proved more costly than all the rest.

It was to be made by the two platoons of Capt. Beaver's company occupying the northern part of the 34th's new line of posts, dug the night before.⁴⁰ After daylight on the 5th Lieut. Baillie, holding the posts immediately south of the road, had observed Germans active in their post north of the road, behind his flank, and, foreseeing that his position would soon be untenable, obtained leave to dribble back the garrisons of two posts to the copse and quarry in rear, where the men obtained greatly needed rest. After dark Baillie was called to advanced battalion headquarters, where he learned of the attack to be undertaken almost immediately in conjunction with that north of the road. With two platoons he was to clear the enemy from a strong-post south of the road. Two more platoons, under Lieut. Monfries,⁴¹ would then wire the position. Baillie's platoons would post a covering party ahead of the

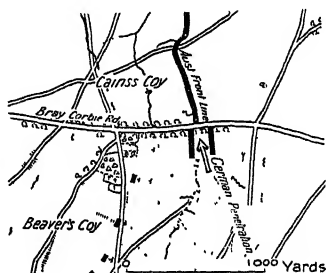
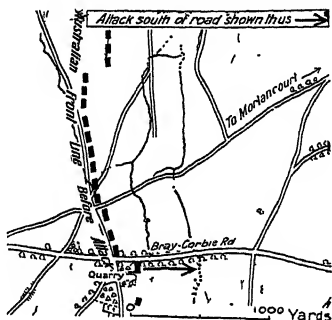
⁴⁰ These were in front of the copse and quarry.

⁴¹ Lt. J. J. Monfries, 34th Bn. School teacher; of Goulburn, N.S.W.; b. Ultimo, N.S.W., 7 Oct., 1891.

wiring party and would then dig in some distance behind the wire.

Returning to his men Baillie had just time to explain to them the operation, when the barrage fell and the line advanced. Some empty rifle-pits were passed and, as the barrage made its final lift, there were seen against it the heads of a line of Germans evidently manning the position to be captured. Five rounds of rapid rifle-fire from Baillie's line lying on the ground caused the heads to disappear, and the New South Welshmen immediately rushed the trench and captured twenty prisoners and a light machine-gun. Lieut. Monfries and his men, following as second wave, had rushed a small post that lay low while the first wave passed, and made a few more prisoners. Throughout the advance the platoons were in touch with Cains's company north of the road.⁴²

A Lewis-gun team was now posted ahead, and the wiring began, while Baillie withdrew his men and dug in sixty yards in rear. Carrying was most difficult, and the wiring party had very little wire, few pickets, and no tools, and in the dark a number of the 34th had lost their way. Work, however, was in progress when, at 2 o'clock, it was reported that some of the enemy had found their way back into the captured trench, which lay between the covering and working parties. Baillie and Monfries collaborated in quickly driving them out again. They now examined the so-called trench and found it to be a line of rifle-pits or "pot-holes," some with ten yards between them, others recently joined to form short trenches. The enemy appeared to have filtered in



⁴² Touch was kept by L.-Cpl J. W. Ireland (East Maitland, N.S.W.).

from the south. Monfries therefore now occupied part of the pot-holes while Baillie set his men to dig across the gaps and ordered his sergeant to block the "trench" farther south.⁴³

Before dawn Monfries withdrew his men north of the road, Baillie's party, then reduced to fourteen men, being left to hold the block and trench. At this stage the Germans, who could see the withdrawal, suddenly attacked the block with bombs and drove the Australians out to the road where Baillie got them to line a number of sump-holes along its edge, facing south.

Till then Capt. Cains, north of the road, had been concerned only with the successful advance and consolidation of his own front. Now, however, he was forced to turn his attention to the south of the road where, he reported at 3.55, the attack "seems in very bad way and wanting assistance." Finding Baillie, almost worn out with the night's work, he ordered him to recapture the trench together with Lieut. Norman,⁴⁴ who volunteered from Monfries's party. Baillie placed two Lewis guns to cover the attempt, and was arranging to give the starting signal when he was wounded. Norman then started and led the attack most gallantly, bombing the Germans out of length after length of the pot-hole line and driving them back well beyond the previous bombing block. The position, however, was abandoned later in the day.

A considerable success had been won—except on the two edges of the plateau, both lines of enemy trench had been captured on a front of three-quarters of a mile, and 153 prisoners (including 3 officers), 10 machine-guns, and 3 trench-mortars had been taken at the cost of only some 100 casualties, mostly minor ones.⁴⁵ At this juncture even such minor successes were encouraging to all the Allied troops, and discouraging to their opponents, and German records make apparent that, from this point of view, the action was even more useful than was realised.

⁴³ This had been enjoined by Lt.-Col. Fry's written order, but time had possibly been too short to explain them to every one. The maps were defective, the German trenches being wrongly shown. Parts of two roads marked on the maps and given as landmarks in some of the orders were non-existent.

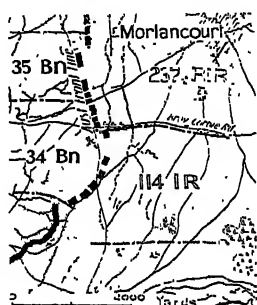
⁴⁴ Lt. T. B. Norman, M.C.; 34th Bn. Indent agent; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. Dunedin, N.Z., 27 Apr. 1888.

⁴⁵ The 35th lost 5 officers and 47 of other ranks, the 34th 2 officers and 32. Lt. W. H. Glossop (Aberdare, N.S.W.) of the 35th was killed just after crossing the first trench.

The attack seems to have been unexpected, this sector being supposed by the higher German command to be a very quiet one. The staff of the XXIII Army Corps, which had controlled it, was then being taken out to supervise the training of divisions in rear, handing over its sector to the XIII Corps, commanding the Albert front.

On April 29 and 30 the 50th Reserve (Prussian) Division—excellent troops who had constantly faced the Australians, at Armentières, Polygon Wood, and Dernancourt—were replaced by the 199th Division (recruited from Baden, Pomerania, and Rhine Province), which had suffered heavily in the fighting south of the Luce, and had since been made up to strength with a large influx of nineteen-year-old reinforcements. These youngsters furnished more than half that night's prisoners. Their officers were keenly disappointed with their resistance: one officer told Maj. Carr that two of the old German machine-gun crews, firing obliquely from left and right would have stopped the attack. The historian of the 114th I.R. notes that the division faced "an enemy till now unknown—Australians." Its 237th R.I.R. held the sector north of the Bray road, and the 114th that south of the road. On the night of May 3 the Australian artillery had destroyed some of the regimental "cookers,"⁴⁶ close behind the front. Thereafter the kitchens had to be placed farther back and large ration parties sent up, and the chance presence of these in the trenches of the 237th R.I.R. increased the haul of prisoners. Each regiment was widely extended, especially the 114th, which covered 2,000 metres south of the road.⁴⁷ Each kept all four companies of its forward battalion in the front line. The 114th had its support battalion bivouacked at various points behind the cross-spur, and when the right flank company of the forward battalion was driven back south of the Bray-Corbie road, one of these companies helped it to repel the 34th's flank. "But the Australians," says the regimental history, "constantly received reinforcements," and, after a fluctuating fight, the 114th had to give way again. A second company attempted further counter-attack about dawn,⁴⁸ but the daylight was found too clear for approaching the enemy, and the company therefore merely guarded the flank.

In this fight the Germans on the summit between Somme and Ancre lost their only trench-lines. Whereas the British had added these lines to their existing network, already deep and daily extending, behind the German front were only a few short lengths. The main defences there at this moment were the banks of sunken roads. Behind these, chiefly in the woods, were the bivouacs of the close reserves, but the back area was becoming empty as divisions were withdrawn to train for the next offensive. The higher German staffs accepted this situation calmly; their view over the whole front showed them the British Army almost



⁴⁶ The artillery had made several shoots on German field-kitchens, pointed out by the intelligence staff as a suitable target.

⁴⁷ The Australians also were widely extended—2 battalions to 2,500 yards.

⁴⁸ The records of the 34th mention two efforts—at 2 a.m. and 3.45. This was evidently a third, made at about 5 a.m. but not seriously felt.

without reserves, and the French reserves being used up largely and rapidly in Flanders. But the local commanders and front-line troops were rendered anxious, and this tension quickly increased.

Tactically, it is true, the new Australian line had some serious disadvantages, and Australian Corps Headquarters was by no means at ease about it. If the expected (German offensive fell on the Amiens front, it would (as one diary notes) find the Australian position here "not so good as before Rosenthal's advance." The 3rd Division's right flank, which previously had looked out on a wide valley with 1,000 yards' field of fire, was now precariously lodged close below a summit over which it could not see; and with the Germans at Sailly-Laurette in its right rear. "They must get the crest on the right to be secure," the same diary states.

Throughout daylight on May 6th the front-line troops generally had to lie low, but, after much confusion in the arrangements,⁴⁰ an attempt was made that night by Monfries's party from the flank and Capt. McMinn's⁵⁰ company supported by part of Beaver's from the front, to seize the German line for 1,100 yards south of the Bray-Corbie road. The time set was 9.15, and the order, which was not sent until 8 p.m., reached Capt. Beaver precisely at the starting time. McMinn had received it earlier, but too late for any reconnaissance, and the night was black with heavy rain falling. Very late McMinn's four platoons moved across the valley and, though touch between them was lost, headed for their several objectives in the Ger-

**Attempt on
May 6th-7th**

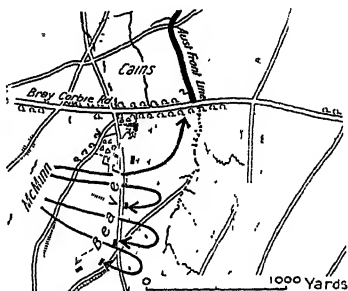
⁴⁰ From 5 to 6.45 that afternoon the German posts were to be bombarded by artillery and afterwards by Stokes mortars. At 7 Monfries was to bomb down the supposed trench as far as the supposed road. In the order sent at 4.55 by Lt.-Col. Fry (34th) Monfries was told that after dark troops would be pushed out ahead of him to cover the process of wiring his front. He would send his reports to Capt. Beaver, still holding the support-line posts behind him.

Capt. Cains, till then practically without word from the rear, and uncertain whose command he was under, received this order at 6.45, just before the attack was due to start. But the first order was followed by another by which, at 9.15 or as soon afterwards as dusk permitted, Capt. McMinn's company, then in reserve in the old Australian front line, was to pass through the existing front posts of the 34th and complete the capture of the German line on the cross-spur for 1,100 yards south of the Bray-Corbie road. After taking any German posts encountered, the company would lie out as a screen, behind which a composite company (consisting partly of platoons relieved from the front line, to be reorganised by Capt. Beaver together with part of his own company) would then wire the posts, which would be finally garrisoned by McMinn. On the left the troops under Monfries were to assist.

⁵⁰ Maj. H. H. McMinn, 34th Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of West Maitland, N.S.W.; b. Braidwood, N.S.W., 3 Nov. 1887.

man line. One in the centre came up against the same strong wire against which Lilja's patrol had lain on the night of May 4th. Several German machine-guns opened, rendering its attempt obviously hopeless.

The two southern platoons apparently reached the line desired, but, their position being isolated and dangerous, their leaders withdrew them to the existing outposts of Beaver's company. The northern platoon was led by Lieut. Hubbard,⁵¹ fresh from his cadet course at Oxford. He came against a strong German post and was beaten off by a machine-gun after losing several men. But his orders were to get touch with Monfries, and this he proceeded to do.



The advance of Monfries's party along the pot-hole line had gone well enough until they reached the portion strongly held by the German reinforcements. Here they met with vigorous bombing and presently fell back to the old block. The party of pioneers who were to have dug a trench on the objective had apparently lost their way—no trench had been dug when, at 1.30, Hubbard and his platoon arrived. He found Monfries and his men occupying a few pot-holes only a foot in depth, under constant fire, and, there being no room with them, he placed his platoon in the drainage holes beside the road. A platoon under Lieut. Bruce coming up a little later to relieve the troops south of the road found that, on this morning, as before, they had all fallen back. McMinn's southern platoons now held the right of the old outpost-line while Beaver still held the left.

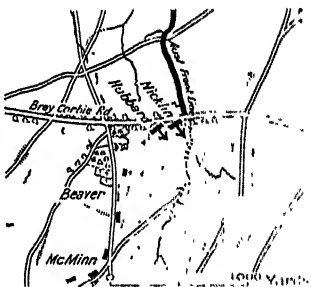
Fry ordered that a new attack should be made at once from the Corbie-Bray road, and he arranged for a preliminary artillery bombardment and trench-mortar barrage. The order reached Hubbard, but the task set was so obviously beyond the power

⁵¹ Maj. S. H. Hubbard, 34th Bn. Accountant; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. Colchester, Eng., 1 May 1887.

of his platoon that he ran across the road and reported to Capt. Cains, who promised to inform battalion headquarters. The hour for the attack appears to have been more than once postponed, notification concerning the barrage only reaching the front at the hour eventually chosen. Before Cains could warn his men the barrage burst over them, and all that he and his troops could do was to lie low in their trench with short falling shells skimming their parapets, while bombs from the trench-mortars actually burst far behind the line. Cains reporting this asked if he was to continue to arrange an attack.

At this juncture Lieut. Lilja, anticipating that Cains would order his platoon to carry it out, was allowed by Cains to go back to headquarters and make sure that the arrangements for the barrage were satisfactory. Crawling along the Bray-Corbie road he reached the rear and arranged with Col. Fry that the assault should be launched at 2 p.m. and covered by the Stokes mortars. He then visited Lieut. Mailer, commanding the mortars, and asked him to lengthen range. Mailer was loath to do so, local observers of this difficult terrain having reported the previous range as correct. "Don't worry about what others say," urged Lilja. "I've got to do the job, and if anything's wrong with the barrage it's I who catch it. Put it down 300 yards ahead of where you did last time, and that'll do me."

On returning to Cains Lilja found that the attack was to be made not by his platoon, but by those of Lieut. Nicklin,⁵² who was to extend along the road behind Cains's right flank, and Hubbard, lining out next to Nicklin's. Lilja accordingly crept out along the road ahead, and from a sump-hole beside it,⁵³ when the Stokes opened, fired rifle-grenade after rifle-grenade along the line of pot-holes which from there he directly enfiladed. Both Stokes shells and



⁵² Lt. S. R. Nicklin, 34th Bn. Clerk; of Turramurra, N.S.W.; b. North Sydney, 2 Sep. 1892

⁵³ He had L.-Cpl. Morgan in the next sump-hole on guard with a Lewis gun, and his gas orderly (Pte. J. T. Herring, of Narromine) and Capt. Cains observing.

grenades fell accurately along the German line and after a minute Germans began to bolt towards the rear. Nicklin and Hubbard advanced with their platoons as fast as they could by sectional rushes. A number of German machine-gun posts in rearward positions seeing the attack opened strong fire; but with only three or four men hit the pot-hole line was reached for 200 yards south of the road. That night the pioneers arrived, connected up the pot-holes, and dug through the road,⁵⁴ and this sector was thenceforward firmly held. On the right the 29th Battalion (5th Division) also had advanced its flank posts to cover the right of the 34th.

The history of the German 114th I.R., whose III Bn., reinforced by a company of the II, was holding this sector, states that early in the afternoon a concentration of Australian troops, foreshadowing an attack, was seen and shelled. "Despite this at 3 o'clock the Australians, after strong bombardment by their trench-mortars, advanced from west and north against the two right flank companies of the regiment, but the combined machine-gun, trench-mortar, and rifle-fire, forced them to ground." Losses compelled the bringing up of the rest of the II Bn. either into the line or close behind it.

But 1,200 yards of trench south of Nicklin and Hubbard were still uncaptured, and General Rosenthal, with the approval of the divisional commander (Monash) decided to take the position that night, Mc-Minn's and Beaver's companies advancing to the assault from their present posts. As both companies were weak,⁵⁵ each was to be reinforced by two platoons of the 34th's reserve company, and each would be followed by a half-company of the 33rd acting as second wave. A "creeping" barrage was arranged, the start to be at 11 p.m.⁵⁶

During the afternoon General Monash called on General Hobbs of the 5th Division and asked him to swing forward his left again, north of Sailly-Laurette, in touch with the 34th's advance. Hobbs objected to the operation, but, as time was short, made the necessary arrangements subject to the approval of Corps Headquarters. The chief of the Corps Staff, General White, indicated that he, too, was opposed to the operation, but

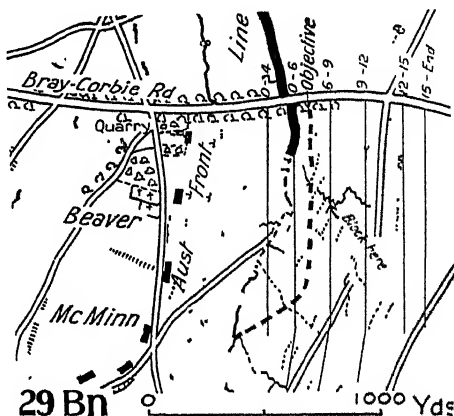
⁵⁴ This trench was afterwards known as the Cunamulla Support Line.

⁵⁵ Hubbard's platoon of McMinn's company was detached, in the pot-hole line.

⁵⁶ Half of the 44th Bn. (11th Bde.) was brought up this night to the old Australian line.

in the afternoon Hobbs found that General Birdwood wished it to be carried out.

Again the orders for the 34th Battalion's advance were fatally late. Neither Capt. Beaver nor Capt. McMinn, whose troops, then in the line of scattered outposts, were to undertake the attack, knew anything of the project until at 9.20 Col. Fry's second-in-command, Capt. Percy,⁵⁷ reached them with the order. They at once warned him that it would be impossible to arrange for the platoons to assemble in time. Beaver said he could only send them a message giving the objective, plan of barrage, and the hour of start, and trust that



Lines of barrage and objective as shown on map with operation order of 7-8 May 1918

they would be able to reach their proper places; McMinn, a member of the regular staff of the Australian forces, simply ordered his platoon commanders to meet him at the assembly point. The half-company of the 33rd that was to support him had to be diverted to reinforce Cains, who just then reported Germans massing on his front. An officer and 24 men of the 33rd came up to replace this half-company, but the other supports for McMinn had not arrived when, accompanied by Lieut. Fell⁵⁸ (who had been sent him to replace a vacancy), he moved to the front-line posts.

Meanwhile Capt. Beaver with his company sergeant-major also had gone forward, joining one of his platoons, and reached the assembly position; but he had no time to discover whether the other platoons were in position when the barrage fell, and

⁵⁷ Capt. (temp. Maj.) H. H. Percy, M.C.; 34th Bn. Survey draughtsman; of Orange, N.S.W.; b. Waratah, N.S.W., 28 Nov. 1890.

⁵⁸ Lt. A. J. Fell, M.C.; 34th Bn. Accountant; of Watson's Bay, N.S.W.; b. Seacombe, Cheshire, Eng., 7 May 1890.

such troops as had had time to assemble and had not lost their way advanced behind it.⁵⁹ There had been no chance for studying the objectives by daylight, and Beaver's only guide was the barrage. When it finally ceased advancing, he guessed that the objective had been attained, ordered the men near him to dig in, and with his sergeant-major searched for the rest of his platoons. After finding them and ascertaining that they were in touch on the left with the company in the pot-hole line,⁶⁰ he and his companion sought McMinn's company for two hours, but in vain.⁶¹ As his platoons with their flank open were in a highly dangerous position, he swung them back across the sector of both companies, so as to connect Cains's right in the pot-hole line with the old posts on the battalion's flank.

This was the situation when daylight arrived. There was no word of McMinn, and no trace of most of his company or the attached half-company of the 33rd. Farther south the 29th Battalion (5th Division), advancing late could get no touch with any troops where the missing company should have been.

Rosenthal hoped that the missing company was out ahead in some German trench on the cross-spur, unable to communicate with him by day, and possibly waiting till night to make the attempt. Col. White⁶² was ordered to send search parties after dark and also to find the flank of the 5th Division, but the dark was again dense and the difficulty of finding direction extreme,⁶³ and from the gap into which McMinn had dis-

⁵⁹ Warning of the attack also reached the troops in the pot-hole trench so late that there was no time to withdraw them as had been intended. The barrage burst right over them, but by crouching low they escaped without loss.

⁶⁰ A party of the 3rd Pioneers dug two T-head posts in front of the pot-hole line and captured three Germans and two machine-guns.

⁶¹ In the intense dark Beaver, too, lost his way and when eventually he turned as he thought rearwards, only the clearly recognised bark of a British field-gun behind him apprised him that he was walking towards the enemy.

⁶² Temporarily relieving Col. Fry who had been sent to hospital with gas burns.

⁶³ Near the Bray-Corbie road there occurred this night a comedy of errors. Four machine-gunners of the 10th M.G. Coy. were returning from the rear with rations for their posts, when their leader, L.-Cpl. A. Nicholls (Geelong West, Vic.), was wounded. The three unwounded men went on towards their posts but lost their way. Seeing, however, by the light of a flare a number of men erecting wire, one of them, Pte A. O. Oakhill (Toogoolawah, Q'land), walked across to obtain direction. The men proved to be Germans and, running into a party of seven, he was seized and made prisoner. This party set off to take him to the German rear, but they too lost their way, strayed far into the Australian line, and, near the Bray-Corbie road, met the scout officer of the 33rd, Lt. W. G. Mason (Armidale, N.S.W.), with his runner, who were going up to the line. Mason managed to "duck" clear; his runner, being caught, fought the Germans and broke away, but was immediately shot. After firing at him again—apparently to make sure that he was dead—the Germans went on, but meanwhile Mason had run to the nearest post and, getting some men to go out with him, returned and captured the Germans. At this stage his runner came up; he had only been wounded.

appeared German machine-guns firing strongly made movement in that neighbourhood practically impossible. The patrols had four men hit, and failed in both tasks.

The history of the 114th I.R., against whose III Bn., reinforced by the whole of the II, this night's attack came, says: "In the pitch dark night it was impossible to distinguish friend from enemy. The enemy succeeded in breaking into the right sector of the regiment's front and pushing as far as the main defence line. In the southern sector he was able only to seize the forward zone." The 5th Coy., whose young commander, Res.-Lt. Ries, was mortally wounded, "retook" the main line. Only on the right flank a little indent remained, but the regiment's losses were great, including six officers.

This difficult patrolling made it clear that McMinn's party had been captured, but, before this was reported from his own front, General Birdwood learned from the German wireless that four Australian officers and 41 men had been captured. Actually McMinn, who, to achieve an orderly assembly had delayed his advance until 11.10 and dared not to wait longer, set out with 7 officers and 85 men to seize 600 yards of German front, and succeeded in breaking through it. Shortly afterwards, finding only Germans on his flanks; he decided to fall back. He and his men moved down a slope but eventually found themselves half a mile behind the German line, where, after lying low in a wood till morning, they surrendered.⁶⁴

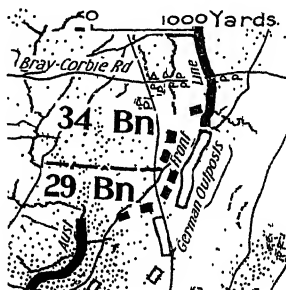
⁶⁴ The details were learnt only when the prisoners returned to England after the Armistice. After receiving the operation order McMinn at 10.30 saw one of his subalterns, Lt. L. S. McMahon (West Maitland, N.S.W.) and gave him the order to attack, keeping touch with the 29th Bn. McMahon saw two other platoon commanders, Lts. S. W. Bateman (St. Kilda, Vic.) and R. S. Brown (Maitland, N.S.W.) who had not yet received their orders, and told them that "they were in it too." McMahon ranged his platoon on the flank, with Bateman's next to it, and twice sent his batman to find the 29th on his right. The batman could discover no sign of it and McMahon therefore sent him back to its nearest post. The barrage then fell. The half-company of the 34th which was to have reinforced McMinn was not there, having lost its way, but Lt. G. C. W. Reid (Sydney) and his handful of the 33rd were present. McMinn sent Lt. Fell (who had not even had time to study the map) with a request to Capt. Beaver to keep touch. Fell found two men of Beaver's company on their way to the assembly, and passed the message to them. On his return, at 11.10, the barrage was already slackening; and McMinn, though out of touch on both flanks, advanced to take his objective and hold on until the flanking troops came up.

The troops had been told that they were to cross two roads and lie down on a third road, a considerable distance in front. Two roads had been duly crossed when the enemy ahead opened fire with rifles and a machine-gun. The trench was quickly rushed, the Germans running before it was reached but maintaining fire from their machine-gun farther back. After passing the trench Lt. Brown was mortally wounded. A dozen men in all were hit before the company was halted.

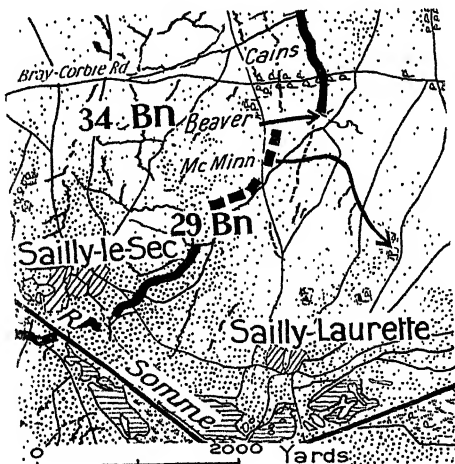
Part of the enemy's main line had evidently been taken, but the troops were without instruments for digging-in except their small entrenching tools. The Germans at once counter-attacked on the flanks, but were easily beaten. It was, however, plain that the company had merely obtained a lodgment between two bodies of

The I Bn., 114th I.R. had now taken over the front line in the sector (with half of the III attached). The regimental historian says that the Australians undertook yet a last attack against the right wing, but were repelled by well-aimed fire and salvos of bombs. "A few wounded Australians were taken prisoners."

On May 9th Col. White reported that any attempt to capture the enemy's line on this height without artillery preparation would involve unnecessary loss. A gap existed in the thin line of posts extended by Beaver, but it was covered by a post in the support line. With this report from an officer so highly trusted the Australian commanders were content. It was found that the 5th Division's posts had been duly placed as reported, although their advance was much later even



the enemy; no fighting had been heard at any stage on either flank and no Australians could be found there. After waiting for a quarter of an hour, McMinn decided to withdraw. The company accordingly retired down the slope, but after going 200 yards came on some wicker ammunition-baskets of German pattern. The bark of a British field-gun, however, was heard and they went on towards it. Presently two scouts, sent to reconnoitre, returned to say that the gun, though British, was part of a German battery. It was clear that they were far behind the German lines. Having no prismatic compass, they moved into a small wood but it was presently shelled by their own artillery and they were forced to shift to another wood near by. They intended to make for their own lines at dawn, but at that hour they found that there were Germans all round them; a German officer and some men walked close by to a battery headquarters, beyond which the party had penetrated. As they could not remain much longer undiscovered McMinn held a council with his men. They had little ammunition left, escape was hopeless, and by a majority vote they decided to surrender. After destroying maps and papers, and disabling the Lewis gun, McMinn and Fell went to the headquarters and surrendered their party.



than McMinn's.⁶⁵ The flank post, which was considerably ahead of the 34th, was moved back, and a trench was eventually dug linking the outpost-line.

On the other side of the spur the 39th Battalion also had advanced its flank to conform with the progress of the 35th, but its posts could not be located from the flank of the 35th; for here, too, free movement even at night was still prevented by a troublesome German post—the one near the communication trench which Connell's company had failed to capture. After the 35th's attack, sniping from this and other posts near by directly enfiladed the 35th's straight, shallow front trench, making it very dangerous. By day the garrison could only sit still in the water and mud until the position was gradually improved by the nightly working parties. On May 7th Col. Goddard reported that his men were becoming worn out by these conditions. By the night of the 10th, when the 2nd Australian Division after ten days' rest came in between the rivers to relieve the 3rd, one good communication trench⁶⁶ had been dug by the pioneers across the plateau north of the road, and the troops there came out in comfort.

⁶⁵ The operations of the 29th Bn., which, like the 34th, till May 4 held only the western slope of the valley, were as follows:

May 4/5. A *liaison* patrol on the battalion's left flank kept guard in the valley leading to the south, protecting the right flank of the 34th Bn. in its silent advance.

May 5/6. Apparently no action was asked for.

May 6/7. To conform with the first advance of McMinn's platoons, part of the left company of the 29th crossed the valley and lined the sunken Saily-Laurette-Treux road. A patrol under Lt. W. J. Lambden searched the ground ahead but found no enemy. Parties of the 29th and 32nd wired portion of the new front. At 7.30 in the morning a company of Germans was seen advancing opposite the new posts; the artillery was called to fire, and stopped them with an accurate barrage. Patrols could not find the posts of the 34th on the left.

May 7/8. Half the left company of the 29th was to swing farther forward, and half the reserve company to advance on its left in touch with McMinn. The flank of the left company, and the right platoon of the reserve, though starting very late owing to the late receipt of orders, rushed a German post in their front, capturing three of the garrison and killing the remainder. The left platoon of the reserve could not find McMinn's company. The reserve company commander had received his orders too late to get more than a distant glimpse of the ground before dark, and the operation was exceedingly difficult. The wiring party lost its way, but the flank platoon was pushed still farther to the left and an additional platoon sent up from support formed a flank for it, facing north.

May 8/9. The flank post of the 29th was pushed a little farther east in the endeavour to find McMinn. The flank of the 34th was found farther back.

May 9/10. The flank post was brought back a little to facilitate touch with the 34th.

⁶⁶ "King Street"; it was continued towards battalion headquarters by "Collins Street." A second communication trench ("Camden Street") was begun just north of the Bray-Corbie road.

The operations of May 4th-9th had cost the 9th Brigade 18 officers and 246 of other ranks.⁶⁷

The German loss was probably heavier, including, as it did, over 170 prisoners. The blow was very disturbing, locally, to the enemy—the historian of the 114th I.R. says that nerves were so highly strung that an N.C.O. leading a German patrol reported the German field-kitchens as “tanks behind the front line.” Obviously the 199th Divn. was in no condition to make an effective counter-attack or even to resist further attacks, and the 31st I.R. (18th Divn.) had to be inserted into the divisional front in order to hold the important sector astride the Bray-Corbie road.

From the British point of view, but for the miscarriage on the night of May 7th the operations could have been counted wholly successful. Rosenthal reported that he could find no fault in the order and dispositions for that night's attack.⁶⁸ The defect, however, lay not in the order itself, but in the extreme lateness of its issue, which allowed no time for proper assembly, much less for the reconnaissance vitally necessary for an attack on a dark night in an area almost without landmarks.

This advance on the heights south of Ville had placed the Germans in that village in a difficult position: with the crests on both flanks held by their opponents, their retention of the village on the flats remained possible only because of the trees and buildings screening their posts. Indeed, when on May 8th shells, believed to be German, were seen to burst in Ville, the Australian staff suspected that the place might have been evacuated except for a few sentry groups. Accordingly the 39th and 40th Battalions, holding the fronts west and north of it respectively, were ordered to send out parties at dark on that night, to endeavour to push through and establish a line east of the village. This attempt, made

An attempt on Ville

⁶⁷ The 3rd Pioneer Bn. lost 22 men and the 10th M.G. Coy. an officer (Capt W. M. Algie) and a few men. The details of the 9th Bde.'s loss are:

| | Offrs. | Others | | Offrs. | Others. |
|----------|--------|--------|-----------------|--------|---------|
| 33rd Bn. | 2 | 59 | 35th Bn. | 8 | 80 |
| 34th Bn. | 8 | 102 | 9th L.T.M. Bty. | — | 5 |

⁶⁸ He noted that there was no clearly defined trench-system “on which our troops could align themselves when making the final rush,” and that the protective barrage may have been placed a little too far ahead of their objective.

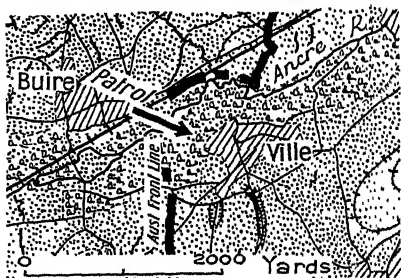
at 9.30 p.m., proved that the village was still strongly defended.⁶⁹

The 3rd Division went out after six and a half weeks in the line. When, on May 11th, the 2nd Division assumed control, the sector on top of the ridge, where the recent advances had taken place, was taken over by the 5th (N.S.W.) Brigade which, like its predecessor, the 9th, had received ample rest since returning from its fighting near Hangard and Villers-Bretonneux.⁷⁰ On the left, astride the Ancre and facing Ville, Maj.-General Smyth placed the 6th Brigade. On the day before relieving General Monash he was informed that his division would probably be ordered at an early date to capture Ville, and was asked to prepare plans immediately. While these plans were being drafted, both the forward brigades of the 2nd Division continued the restless activity of peaceful penetration.

**2nd Divn.
comes in**

On the night of May 10 a patrol of ten of the 22nd Bn. under Lt.

⁶⁹ The events were as follows. At 9.30 the party from the 40th under Lt. McMillan, having moved out from Buire and crossed the Ancre bridge between the villages, moved cautiously forward along both sides of the main road, which they found themselves forced to follow, the neighbouring ground being marsh. After stealing for 200 yards from tree to tree along the roadside, the leading men saw a German cross the track close ahead of them and move to some post sixty yards south of it. Next came the noise of a machine-gun being mounted. Getting his riflemen to shell the post, McMillan with the rest of his men crawled forward to attack it from the flanks. At this moment a flare was fired by the Germans. It fell among the Tasmanians, and from other posts on both flanks enemy machine-guns opened. Returning to the road, McMillan called to the northern party, under Sgt. F. E. Fletcher (Glen Huon, Tas.) to push on into the village and meet the party of the 39th, he and his men would advance at the same time. At that juncture, however, came news which stopped the attempt. A most enterprising signalling officer, Lt. Jackson of the 40th, had run out a telephone line with the party from each battalion, and, speaking from the 40th's front line, he now informed McMillan that the 39th's party had met opposition and had withdrawn. As German machine-guns, firing from one point after another as the alarm spread, showed the line to be normally garrisoned, McMillan retired, bringing back with great difficulty all his casualties—one dead man and four wounded—across the bridge to Buire. A few minutes later this route was shelled, one shell killing a sentry group of the 40th.



⁷⁰ It also held for a few days the southern sector of V Corps.

Wall⁷¹ pushed out in the dark along the bottom of the spur south-west of Ville towards the Little Caterpillar sunken road. On nearing the German post there, Wall dropped six of his men to cover him and crept ahead with the rest. As he lay watching at a point from which the German machine-guns at the sunken road and a listening post ahead of them could be discerned, one of the men in his rear party coughed, and shortly afterwards a patrol came out from the German lines in that direction. As it approached, Wall ordered it to halt and then, as the Germans were clearly going to fight, fired. Two Germans were hit and a third was captured; the remainder ran off, chased with bombs. Wall brought back his three prisoners (of the 357th I.R., 199th Divn.) without loss to his own party.

On the summit on the right, where the 9th Brigade had advanced, the 5th Brigade also had begun to make captures. The brigade's war diary of May 11th says:

18th Bn. rang up to say that an officer's party liaising with right post of 6th Bde. had called in on an enemy post (K.7.a. 45.35)⁷² where they found 100 bombs and a light machine-gun ready for firing but no enemy. They brought back the gun.

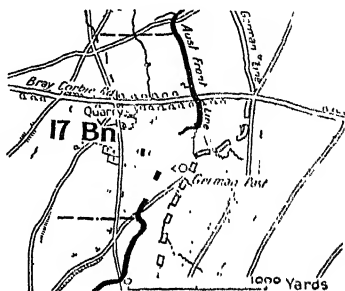
Lieut.-Col. Murphy of the 18th Battalion, a most competent commander and an able tactician, was by no means satisfied with the position of his front line, very close to the top of the nearest gully leading to Morlancourt but with barely any view into that valley. From May 12th onwards he urged that, when the 6th Brigade attacked Ville, his battalion also should be allowed to advance and seize 700 yards of the new German front line astride of the head of the valley. General Smyth at first was unfavourable, believing that he would have too little field artillery for covering both operations.

Actually it was from the other flank that trouble struck the 5th Brigade. The awkward gap where McMinn's company of the 34th had gone through was still barely bridged. From each side of it a trench was being dug, but the northern horn was still only 150 yards long, the next 500 yards being still undug and unguarded except by one post at the northern end of the half-dug support line. The German post that McMinn had seized had been re-established by the enemy, and lying on the

⁷¹ Lt. H. M. M. Wall, M.C.; 22nd Bn. Student; of St. Kilda, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, 4 Jan. 1896. Killed in action, 27 Aug. 1918.

⁷² That is, in the northern continuation of the line from which the 9th Bde. had ousted the Germans

summit, in the centre of the gap, it still rendered the nightly work most difficult. The obvious course was to smash it with artillery, but both the gap and the neighbouring posts, German and Australian, were hard to locate with accuracy; by day it was unsafe to move within nearly half a mile except by creeping, and by night the posts and trenches were hard to find in the low crop. On May 13th the young brigade-major of the 5th Brigade, Capt. MacCallum, made a survey of the gap from the trenches of the 29th Battalion. The offending post was recognised in a fleck of orange clay parapet



over the green barley on top of the hill, and at 3 a.m. next day (May 14th), after the men in the nearest posts of the 17th Battalion had been withdrawn to a safe distance, the 107th and 108th Batteries—4.5-inch howitzers of the 3rd Division—shelled the place for five minutes. Immediately they stopped, a dozen men under Lieut. West⁷³ of the 17th went out to ascertain the damage. But all the shots had fallen beyond the target, and when the patrol was fifty yards from the post a machine-gun opened from it. The patrol replied with its Lewis gun and bombs, but the trench was protected by wire-entanglements and by the fire of other posts farther back, and West had to leave it unvisited.

The garrisons nearest to the gap had returned to their positions, and the patrol was withdrawing to the rear when, at 3.45, a heavy German bombardment suddenly fell on the area and the rattle of German machine-guns broke out. It was not unexpected that the German artillery would reply to the recent shoot, but this bombardment was unusually severe and fell on the front-line posts of the 17th—both those of Capt. MacKenzie's company to right and rear of the gap, and those of Capt. Ronald's company to left of it, astride of the Bray-Corbic road. The fire was accurate and men began to be hit. Presently the curtain of shells advanced, and the posts of the

⁷³ Lt. A. S. West, 17th Bn. Student; of Eagle Junction, Brisbane; b. Geelong, Vic., 17 July 1896. Died of wounds, 17 July 1918.

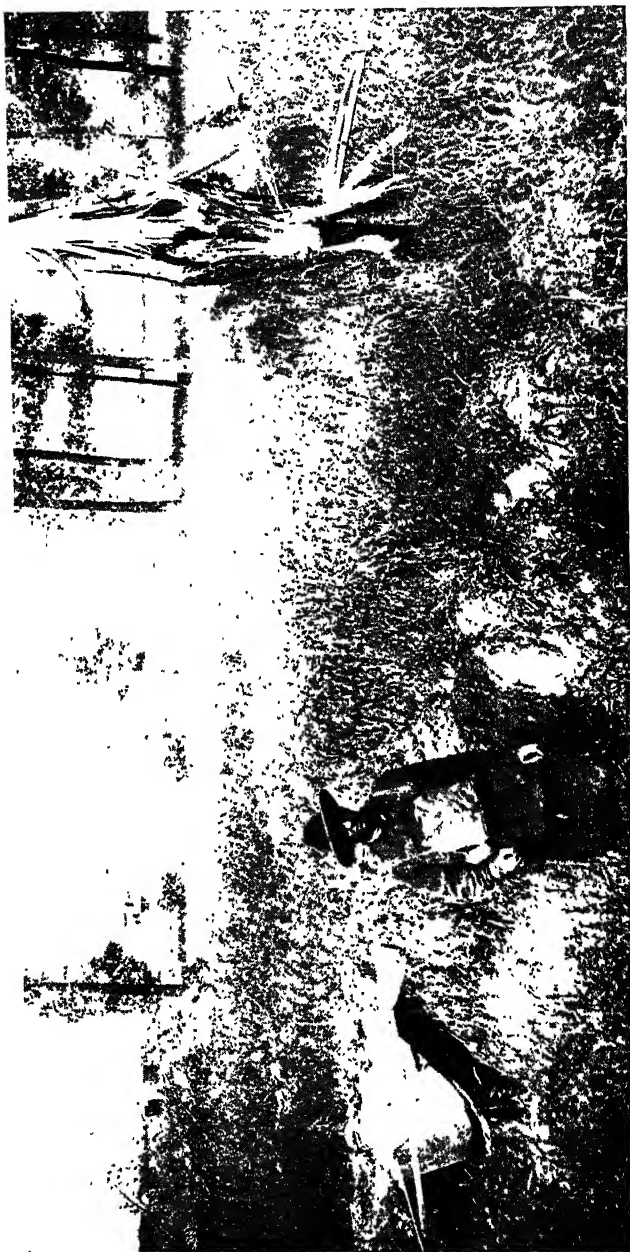


6. A FOLD IN THE SOMME VALLEYSIDE

Head of the gully leading southward to the Somme at Sailly-le-Sec. From a similar, but wider, valley east of Sailly-le-Sec the 9th Brigade carried out its advance on 4th-9th May, 1918. The Bray-Corbie road ran along the summit at the head of the valley. The shelters along the bank are those of the support battalion.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo No E4784.
Taken on 24th April, 1918.*

To face p 96.

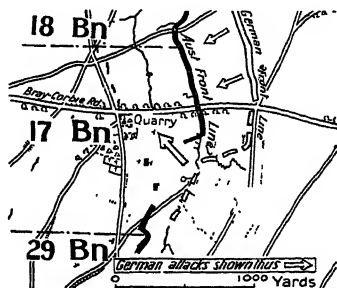


7. IN THE VILLE MARSHES

Capt. J. A. Mahony, 24th Battalion, at his company headquarters. On the left can be seen a water tank near the railway west of Dernancourt and on the right part of the bank of the Ancre.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E2479.
Taken on 14th June, 1918.*

17th between the gap and the battalion's left flank (then 250 yards north of the Bray-Corbie road) saw parties of the enemy approaching. It was still dark, but men were visible at thirty yards, and the fire of the northern posts quickly stopped the Germans on their front. The enemy south of the gap, however, came on and, notwithstanding the fire of a Lewis gun from the 34th Battalion's old bombing-block,⁷⁴ passed through and charged down the posts in the northern arm of the new trench. An Australian sergeant, who came from there wounded later in the morning, said that the garrison, just returned after the Australian bombardment, saw the enemy coming over



about 200 strong. They fired at him and wounded a great many. The enemy got into the post and captured eight or nine of our men. The sergeant got away with two men and brought some men up and remanned the post, where he found only a wounded Hun, who said that the remainder had gone further on.

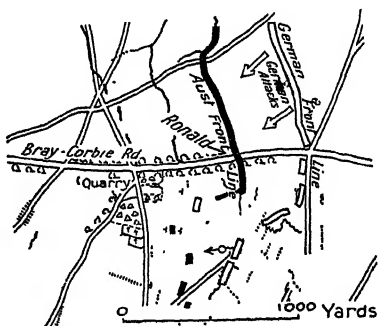
An Australian—a recent reinforcement—whom the Germans found sitting in the trench and hit on the head with a club, jumped to his feet, bayoneted his assailant, and escaped in the dark. Another,⁷⁵ whose post was overrun, was told by the Germans to go to their rear—they had not enough troops to escort him. He picked up a German rifle, shot his captor, and escaped. A third was being escorted by two Germans when they were shot and he got clear. Probably a dozen or more other prisoners were taken. Most of the penetrating Germans were then led on by their officers over the low crops. Capt. Ronald hurried to his northern post which, under Lieut. L. G. Mackenzie,⁷⁶ was then firing at the line of Germans in front. He was intensely anxious as to the size of the force that had

⁷⁴ The gunner, Pte. C. F. Cracknell (Erskineville, N.S.W.) fired 3,000 rounds during the action.

⁷⁵ Pte. E. C. Ralphs (No. 6861; 17th Bn.). Student; of Parkes, N.S.W.; b. Parkes, 8 May 1900.

⁷⁶ Lt. L. G. Mackenzie, 17th Bn. Bank clerk; of Bathurst, N.S.W.; b. Leichhardt, N.S.W., 15 May 1896.

passed to the rear. If this was part of a big attack, his position was precarious. At that moment there was a shout: "The — are at the back of us," and, looking round, Ronald saw an officer leading fifteen men. "Look out! it may be C Company,"⁷⁷ he shouted to his men, who were about to fire. At the same moment the strange officer gave some order in German, and his men lowered their bayonets to charge. Six Australian rifles blazed. Five Germans, including the officer, fell, others ran away. Five were captured, and one of these, who could speak English, said, on being questioned, that the attacking party numbered only 150 and its object was to recapture the area previously taken by the 34th south of the Bray-Corbie road.



Ronald was perfectly confident in dealing with such a force. As a first measure he sent Lieut. Kelsall,⁷⁸ with a dozen men and a Lewis gun to crawl out in rear and guard his trench against the enemy in that quarter. Kelsall presently sighted the intruding Germans, in the open crop-land, 150 yards behind the front and a little south of the Corbie road. They had lost their officers and appeared to be in doubt what to do, their N.C.O's walking about, shouting, while most of the men dug in or improved some old rifle-pits there. Kelsall and his men managed to crawl to within fifty yards and lay down in the crop there. Ronald next sent Lieut. Mackenzie to place a similar party along the Bray-Corbie road on Kelsall's flank, north of the Germans. Mackenzie, creeping out and seeing

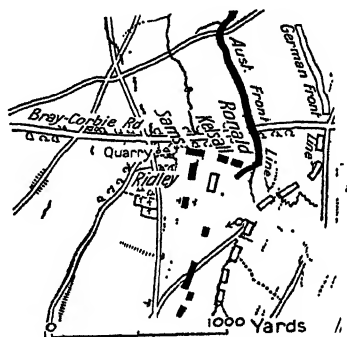


⁷⁷ The support company (Lt. Small's).

⁷⁸ Lt. C. P. Kelsall, 17th Bn. Farmer; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 25 Apr. 1888. Killed in action, 14 May 1918.

men digging twenty yards away, called, "Is that you, Kel?" Getting no reply, he shouted louder. A man replied, "No, komm on Tommi" and beckoned to him. At the same time came Kelsall's voice: "Get down, you fool. They're Fritzes." MacKenzie fired his revolver, ran back, lined out his men along the road in touch with Kelsall, and then reported back to Ronald. It was 5 a.m. and daylight.

Officers and men in the support posts had assumed that the German bombardment was a reply to the British one, and, when some of these posts saw men moving against the sky, they at first took them for Australians; but the arrival of some refugees of a ration party, scattered by the German barrage, caused Lieut. Small,⁷⁹ commanding the support company, to take forward a few men and investigate. On reaching the quarry behind the support line south of the Bray-Corbie road, he saw ahead the Germans digging. He immediately brought up most of his company to the quarries. The line of the 34th's old support posts ran close in front; the nearest was no longer held, but before 5 a.m. Small sent a platoon under Lieut. Ridley⁸⁰ to occupy it and, later, a second platoon, under Lieut. Sams,⁸¹ to lie out beside the Corbie-Bray road, facing south.



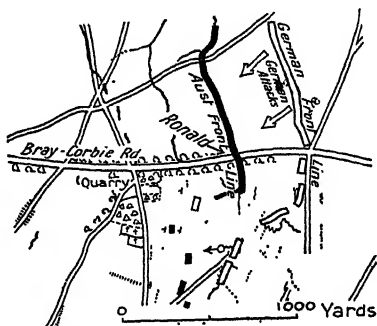
Thus before daylight was full, by the independent actions of two company commanders on the spot, each taking immediately the appropriate steps, the Germans were thoroughly pocketed. Only then was headquarters of the 17th Battalion learning that something unusual was happening; the German bombardment had broken all telephone lines from its forward companies, but at 5.30 there came in some stretcher-bearers, who said that the Germans had broken through between the

⁷⁹ Lt. G. Small, M.C.; 17th Bn. Salesman; of Goulburn, N.S.W.; b. Darlinghurst, N.S.W., 1894. Killed in action, 31 Aug. 1918.

⁸⁰ Lt. T. Ridley, M.C., D.C.M.; 17th Bn. Coal-miner; of Abermain, N.S.W.; b. New Lambton, N.S.W., 6 June 1884. Died of wounds, 10 Sep. 1918.

⁸¹ Lt. C. J. Sams, M.C.; 17th Bn. School teacher; of Waverley, N.S.W.; b. Bumberry, N.S.W., 5 July 1893. Died 3 Dec. 1932.

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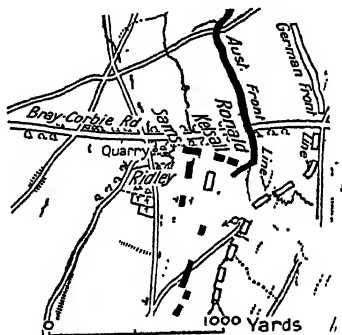


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two front-line companies. The battalion on the left, the 18th, also had now heard of the affair, and its commander, Lieut.-Col. Murphy, rang up offering to send Capt. Lane's company to counter-attack. The 17th, however, had still a company (Capt. Wright's)⁸² in reserve in the old French line, and Maj. Middleton,⁸³ acting in command of the battalion, hearing at 6.45 that the Germans were behind Ronald's company, sent Wright's to the valley behind the support line.

Meanwhile the three forward company commanders, having taken their immediate urgent precautions, proceeded to get touch with one another and themselves to arrange a counter-attack.⁸⁴ After a quick interchange of views they decided to strike at 10 a.m. A Stokes mortar at the quarries would first bombard the intruding Germans, and, as soon as it ceased, Sams's platoon from the Bray-Corbie road would advance, Ridley's platoon in the old outpost trench at the same time firing rifle-grenades to keep the Germans' heads down, and Mackenzie's company farther south opening rifle and machine-gun fire on the enemy near them with the same object. As Sams's platoon neared the Germans, Ridley's would join in, and the two would push straight through to the trench formerly occupied by Lieut. Ham's post. Meanwhile Ronald would be bombing down to this point from the north—in order to have all his men available he had already sent to Capt. Cadle's⁸⁵ company of the 18th Battalion on his left asking it to take over temporarily the part of his line north of the road. Maj. Middleton of the 17th, on

⁸² Capt. J. L. Wright, M.C.; 17th Bn. Engineering student; of Watson's Bay, N.S.W.; b. Watson's Bay, 31 Dec. 1891.

⁸³ Maj. S. A. Middleton, D.S.O., O.B.E.; 17th and 19th Bns. Clerk; of Drummoyne, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 24 Feb. 1884.

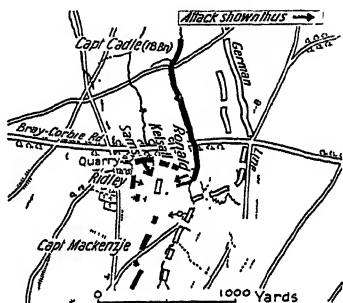
⁸⁴ The arrangements were quickly made as follows. Lt. Small, in the supports, sent his company sergeant-major, J. H. Murphy (Orange, N.S.W.) to Ronald, whom it was now possible to reach, even by day, by the help of the partly dug communication trench north of the main road. Capt. Ronald's position was not easy: he could now see the enemy not only in his rear, but in force along his front and that of the 18th Bn. north of him, digging in 200-300 yards away. These last must be prevented from interfering while he was ousting the Germans from his trenches and from his rear. So he asked by messenger that the artillery should keep them under fire, adding that he meant to clear his own line by bombing down it from the north. He asked that Small should at the same time—9 o'clock—attack the Germans in his rear. Murphy returned to Small, who agreed, except that he felt the time allowed to be too short for fully concerted arrangements. He went to Ronald, taking with him Lt. E. W. Dark (Dungog, N.S.W.) so that Dark, after learning the final arrangements, might carry word of them to Capt. Mackenzie's company south of the gap, and arrange for his co-operation. The hour for attack was then changed to 10.

⁸⁵ Capt. L. M. Cadle, 18th Bn. Schoolmaster; of Parramatta and Bathurst, N.S.W.; b. Stockton-on-Tees, Eng., 16 Mar. 1885. Killed in action, 14 May 1918.

hearing that his company commanders were making such arrangements, wisely left the conduct of the operation to them.

Since the early measures by which the unwitting Germans had been pocketed, the scene had been quiet, the detached platoons lying low, waiting upon events. They were screened from sight only by the short green crop, exposed to every low bullet, and by one of these, before the improvised bombardment began, Lieut. Kelsall was killed.

Lt. Small (says a diary written at the time), standing in the open just above the quarry, was directing, giving the time to the trench-mortar to cease fire and to the platoon to advance, etc. At 10 the barrage opened. It was very good—Stokes mortar shells, rifle-grenades (36's⁸⁶ and others), bombs, and rifles (and Lewis guns at the quarry keeping the German guns in the background quiet). The moment any German got up, he was done. This lasted three minutes. Then the platoons started. A German machine-gun got on to them and Sams was wounded—but the thing was a thorough success. Ridley took charge of C Company when they advanced. The Germans were shooting until the line was fairly close. When the line got near our new trench, the Germans there jumped over and ran. There must have been 300 Germans—we took 50 prisoners. . . . The moment the Germans ran, the two Lewis guns dropped down into shell-holes and shot—many Germans got very little way—some were shot just before their trench. Those present think that none got away.



The trenches were cleared, all Germans within the lines were shot or captured, and the few Australians whom they had previously made prisoners were released.⁸⁷ In addition, Capt. Mackenzie of the right company seized the moment when the Germans in the gap were surrendering to their assailants to rush out a small party and capture the advanced enemy machine-gun post which had nightly prevented the working parties from digging across the gap. A machine-gun was captured there together with three of its crew, three others being killed.

⁸⁶ See note on p. 37.

⁸⁷ The first of these was a man who had been carrying the rum jar in the ration party that had been caught in the morning's bombardment. When the party was dispersed he still went on, and ran into the German attack. He was captured and kept by three Germans all day in a shell-hole. After his recapture the rum got through to the platoon for which it was sent, and was hailed as "souvenir rum."

By 10.30 the affair was over, completely successful and leaving the Australians' line better than before. Their casualties were probably not more than those of their opponents, 4 officers and 56 men being killed or wounded. Among those killed was Capt. Cadle of the 18th who most bravely led up, as requested, one of his support platoons north of the road.⁸⁸

The 48 prisoners taken in the main counter-attack were found to belong to the 31st I.R., 18th Divn. The division had been sent out a fortnight previously for a long awaited rest; but, after the battering of the 237th R.I.R. (199th Divn.) by the 9th Bde.'s attacks, this regiment, which also had just been refilled with untried reinforcements, had to be lent to the 199th Divn. and, as already mentioned, was at once inserted in the important sector astride the Bray-Corbie road⁸⁹ the very front which the regiment had recently held. "We found very little left to us of the defences that had cost us weeks of work," says its historian. "... the enemy had seized the position on the heights at the 'Australians' Bush' (the copses by the quarries) on which our outposts formerly lay, and his position protruded along the heights at the Bray-Corbie road."

The history goes on to say that this protrusion of the Australian front was "a thorn in the eye" to regimental headquarters, and, despite the opposition of company and battalion commanders, the new head of the regiment, Maj. von Lossberg, urged upon the 199th Divn. that the ground should be recaptured. His regiment was accordingly allotted the task. "The re-entrant was to be removed and the battalions given the opportunity, before their relief, to bring their as yet untried reinforcements into touch with the enemy."

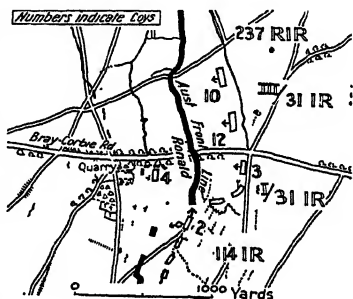
There may be better ways of bringing untried reinforcements into touch with the enemy than that of throwing them into a difficult attack—and this attack was difficult. After three minutes' bombardment by twenty field batteries, six heavy *minenwerfer*, and the light trench-mortars of the 31st I.R., the reserve company (4th) of the 1/31st south of the road was to push out north-westwards (through the gap in the Australian outposts) and roll up the line. At the same time the III Bn. north of the road would advance and keep touch with it. The enterprise was named after the 4th company's commander, Res.-Lt. Senius.

On May 12 and 13 the German artillery tested its ranges, but on the northern flank it was found impossible to correct the short shooting of a heavy battery and a heavy trench-mortar. The attack was made at 3.45 on the 14th. According to prisoners, the 4th Coy. had been specially trained at Bray, and was reinforced by two assault sections from the 3rd and one from the 4th, making 2 officers and 200 men

⁸⁸ Cadle, a young Englishman who had been master in an Australian school, was an officer on whom his brigade had come to know that it could place entire reliance, no matter what the extremity. He could have met Capt. Ronald's request for help by dribbling one of his rear platoons through the communication trench into the 17th's front line, but it seemed to him that, to arrive in time, there was only one way to go—across the open. The Germans opposite the 18th Battalion had been watching the whole action; about seventy could be seen along the edge of the Morlancourt pan, their heads well above their defences. One of their machine-guns was firing from there, and Lt. L. A. Smith (N. Sydney) sent up from the reserve company of the 18th to reconnoitre a way of advance in case that company was required, had been hit by them. But without hesitation Cadle himself led out the platoon. Fierce fire at once met it, and he was killed, but, though a number of others were wounded, his men kept on and reinforced the 17th as requested.

⁸⁹ It relieved parts of the 237th R.I.R. and 114th I.R.

in all. The regimental history says that after passing the old main defence-line (i.e., the southern continuation of Ronald's trench), it met "fairly strong bodies of the enemy lying in the open which were beaten back with salvos of bombs and then chased by machine-gun fire. . . . The sections detailed for garrisoning the covering posts made their way to the west, while those allotted for mopping-up the machine-gun nest turned against the rear of the nest. The Australians occupying it, estimated at 50 men, put up their hands.⁹⁰ When our people had approached within about 50 metres of the trench they received from the communication trench (whose existence was then unknown⁹¹) leading from the nest immediately south of the Bray-Corbie road strong flanking machine-gun fire so heavy that losses occurred and a further advance against the trench of the old main defence-line was impracticable." Meanwhile, north of the Bray-Corbie road, the two companies of the III Bn. allotted for the attack had suffered considerable loss through their own shells and trench-mortar bombs, and at day-break were only at the lip of the Morlancourt pan. Here strong machine-gun fire stopped them, and between them and the I Bn. there still remained what the German account calls the "machine-gun nest on the Bray-Corbie road" (actually the front line of Ronald's and Cadle's companies) "which remained intact."



The local German commanders, believing they had Ronald's position cut off, now sent another company (3rd) of the I Bn. to advance through the gap and capture it. But all that this company and the 2nd (in the old front line) could do was gradually to work up closer; and while they were doing it there appeared at 9.30 what the Germans took as an attack by "about three companies" against part of the III Bn. north of the road. This (obviously Cadle's advance) was fired on by some of the light machine-gunners of the 11th Coy. and by trench-mortars and artillery, and "defeated with great loss to the enemy." Quickly after this came the concerted counter-attack south of the road against the 4th Coy. Senius had been mortally wounded, and all the company seems to have been killed or captured. The 2nd Coy. whose commander also was killed, and the 1st Machine Gun Coy. apparently fired on this attack, and believed that they had stopped it. The machine-gun post taken by Mackenzie's company farther south was held by men of the 114th Regiment, 199th Divn.

The 31st I.R. was relieved two days later by the 232nd R.I.R. (107th Divn.). In its short tour it had lost 277 officers and men—91 of whom were missing. Of the attack on May 14, this historian says: "This completely resultless enterprise cost the I and III Battalions 80 killed and wounded, and the 4th Company a great number of missing besides." The

⁹⁰ The report of the 199th Div. also stated that on the approach of the Germans the garrison of the British trench held up their hands, but that afterwards they tried to defend themselves.

⁹¹ That is, from the partly dug switch north of the gap.

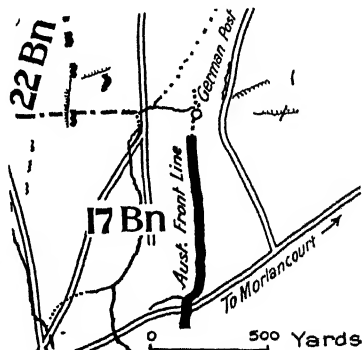
report of the undertaking sent to the army commander, however, stated that the raid by the assault troops of the 31st had been successful. The German front, it claimed, was advanced 400 metres on a front of 250 metres north of the Bray-Corbie road and, south of the road (where a machine-gun checked progress) 250 metres on a front of 200 metres—actually the Germans dug in a little closer to the Australians than before, which they could have done at night without loss. The report further said that a counter-attack on a front of two kilometres (Cadle's and Ronald's effort!) was partly foiled by concentrated artillery fire; that a counter-attack at 1.30 p.m. south of the road came nearer, but was broken up by infantry and machine-gun fire; and that opposite the right wing of the 114th I.R. the enemy worked his way on a 50-metre front up to the German front line. The loss of the 31st is given in this account as 188 including 26 missing.

This fine report apparently brought von Lossberg in the next day's army order the Iron Cross (Class I).

The German artillery shelled the region heavily for the rest of the day but the following days were particularly quiet, and, digging nightly from each side of the gap, the 17th Battalion quickly bridged it.

Colonel Murphy of the 18th Battalion was still uneasy about the position of his left flank, near the lip of Morlancourt pan.

Here, too, near the still uncaptured communication trench was the troublesome machine-gun post which,⁹² by its active sniping at night, hampered the throwing back of a flank to the neighbouring battalion (22nd, of the 6th Brigade), whose nearest post the scouts of the 17th Battalion could not at first locate. On the night of May 15th, however, a strong patrol under Lieut. Satchell⁹³ found it, somewhat to the left rear. A sergeant taped a connecting line, and for the rest of the night the patrol lay out on the crest as covering party, with the machine-gun fire from the German post cracking low overhead, while detachments of the 18th and 19th Battalions dug a trench along the



⁹² See p. 92. The communication trench later was called Hay Street.

⁹³ Lt. E. W. Satchell, 18th Bn. Jeweller; of Waverley, N.S.W.; b. Waverley, 8 Jan. 1893.

tape, slightly on the rear slope.⁹⁴ On the following night the 18th in the front line pushed its left along a chain of old German rifle-pits to within eighty yards of the German post. Rifle-grenadiers and some of the best snipers then manned the extension, each sniper watching an allotted section of the German line, and by their efforts within forty-eight hours the German post became silent by day.

It remained, however, active at night, and dangerous. When Col. Murphy, in response to the demand for prisoners, proposed to raid it, his intelligence officer, Lieut. Irvine, and his scouts and the troops on that flank, on whom the task would fall, were convinced that (to quote one account) "it would be murder at night time." Nevertheless Murphy wanted to clear away this obstacle before the more important attack, which he had now obtained leave to make in extension of the 6th Brigade's forthcoming assault on Ville. He ordered Irvine to reconnoitre it on the night of May 17th.

On the morning of that day Irvine and his scouts went up to the nearest point of the Australian front. It was an exquisite spring day. An Australian diary of that week says:

All these days have been hot, beautiful summer. The trees have burst into thick leaf. There have been one or two thunderstorms—the days have been drowsy and hot—so hot as to stir the lice in the men's shirts and make the day as uncomfortable with crawling denizens as the night has always been—poor chaps.

Irvine found all the men in this sector asleep or dozing except the sentry. His scout sergeant, P. J. Boyce,⁹⁵ remarked, "The Hun will be asleep, too." The same thought had struck Irvine, and the idea now occurred to him—as it had often done to the Australians in Gallipoli—that the front-line garrison might walk across No-Man's Land in this noonday heat and take the opposing trench without receiving a shot. It would be much less costly than a silent raid after dark. Irvine talked the plan over with Lieut. Walters,⁹⁶ commanding that section, and proposed it on the spot to Col. Murphy. Murphy also—to his great annoyance—had found the troops very drowsy, and

⁹⁴ The machine-gun's first shots killed Sgt. C. R. Babb (Leura, N.S.W.) of the covering party.

⁹⁵ Sgt. P. J. Boyce, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 4071; 18th Bn.). Engine-driver; of Sydney; b. Lanarkshire, Scotland, 1888.

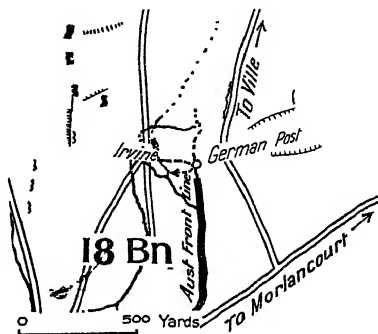
⁹⁶ Lt. A. G. A. Walters, 18th Bn. Clerk in police force; of Newtown, N.S.W.; b. Saffron Walden, Essex, Eng., 2 Feb. 1882. Killed in action, 19 May 1918.

his keen intelligence appreciated the plan; but, "I couldn't possibly put it up to brigade," he said. However, the patrol that night was able to achieve little, and on the morning of the 18th Irvine went up to the same trenches to study the place again. The German post was in a half-dug continuation of the 17th's trench, slightly ahead of the main German line which ran across the head of the gully behind it along the bank of a sunken road⁹⁷ leading down to Ville. Behind this again, in some bushes and banks in the valley, the Germans had a headquarters, with an active trench-mortar. A latrine there had formerly been visited by the garrison of the post, but during the last two days the Australian snipers had stopped this, and the Germans now evidently relieved themselves in the trench, from which a bottle or tin was thrown out at intervals—the only sign of life. But on this hot, drowsy morning even that movement had ceased. The sentry beside Irvine remarked: "They haven't thrown out any tins for over an hour." It was decided that, although brigade had not been informed, the chance was too good to miss. The raid would be launched forthwith. Irvine's scouts were eager; Walters would cover them, in case of need, with a Lewis gun at the northern end of his trench, where it could enfilade the Germans, and another in the new flank trench, which faced the post. Irvine asked for additional volunteers, and so many offered that he had to pick his party.

Leading his men to the flank trench, he lined them out at two paces' interval, explaining that probably the Germans also would be found at two-pace intervals and that each Australian, like a good footballer, was to "mark" his man. With bayonets fixed, they would climb out and advance at a jog-trot, keeping low, until the crest was reached and the post sighted, when they would quietly charge down the slope. For intelligence purposes prisoners must be brought back, and Irvine's intention was to return to the Australian front-line trench, his nearest shelter. "Go for the post in one line," he said. "Rush him without any shouting. Don't fire—use the bayonet. Hang on till night if it's too hot." Walters' instruction to his men who would cover the operation with their fire was: "We are going to lift the Hun post. Look out for your targets."

⁹⁷ An extension of the Big Caterpillar (*see pp. 110-11*).

The arranging took only ten minutes. It was 11.10 a.m. when Irvine gave the signal and climbed out with his eighteen men. The plan succeeded surprisingly. The line of men walked half the way, and ran the rest without a shot being fired at it. When the trench was still twenty yards away a German was observed leaning against its side, smoking a cigarette. As he caught sight of the Australians his mouth opened, the cigarette fell from it, and his hands went straight above his head. A moment later the party had reached the



trench. There were twenty-six Germans in it, all asleep except the sentry and one other who stammered, "Good morning." At this stage one Australian, finding four Germans in a shelter, threw in a bomb, the explosion of which was the first sound that might reach outside ears. As all had gone so well, and there were twenty-two prisoners, Irvine decided to lead the party back by the way it came. As they went, three Germans in a neighbouring post began to shoot. A Lewis gunner immediately fired a burst at them—one German appeared to be hit, and the party was not again fired at. By 11.20 it had returned to the trench without a casualty, with twenty-two prisoners (including an aspirant officer) and a light German machine-gun, and Irvine was telephoning to the adjutant, Lieutenant Robson,⁹⁸ who informed the brigadier. Congratulations poured in from above, General Birdwood especially being pleased with the enterprise.

The prisoners belonged to a fresh division—the 107th—which had just taken over the Morlancourt front. The historian of the 52nd R.I.R., which held that sector, complains of the limited view open to its troops.

"So great was the difficulty of observation," he says, "that on May 18 the English actually succeeded in penetrating into the hollow by

⁹⁸ Lt. L. C. Robson, M.C.; 18th Bn. University student; of North Sydney; b. Waverley, N.S.W., 17 Oct. 1894. (Subsequently headmaster of Sydney C. of E. Grammar School.)

surprise and carrying off both the flank sections of the 9th and 11th Companies. The 10th Company, lying farther to the left (south) saw at this time from 50 to 60 English advancing, and opened strong fire upon them; but the absence of the two sections was not noticed until the company commanders visited the position in the dusk. Even the neighbouring section had seen nothing of the advance of the English. Three sections of the 7th Company were now stationed in the critical sector."

This position was to be attacked in the general operation against Ville, to take place that night, the commander of the 2nd Division having now found enough artillery to cover an advance by the 18th Battalion as well as by the 6th Brigade. News of the German relief was interesting though discovery of the reason for it—which was unknown to the prisoners—would have given reason for apprehension. On the Australian side a result of the raid was the sending of hints from higher authority to the commanders of other Australian battalions—even of the 1st Division in Flanders—that they might test the plan adopted by the 18th. Maj.-General Smyth asked the official war correspondents to avoid, for the present, describing the method employed, so as not to give away its secret.

The 20th Battalion (which had relieved the 17th) was asked to consider walking over in the same manner to seize a German post near the one rushed by Capt. Mackenzie's company on May 14th and almost equally troublesome. Lieut. Winkworth⁹⁹ and Sergt. Davis¹⁰⁰ went out by night to ascertain the feasibility of this, but were at once seen and sniped at and bombed. The wise old soldier then in charge of the battalion, Lieut.-Col. Bennett,¹⁰¹ pointed out that, while such a surprise might be possible against an unsuspecting post in an almost isolated position, it was quite a different matter to attempt it against a post well covered by the machine-guns of other hostile posts and in sight of his main front line. He considered that the attempt would be costly, and the suggestion was accordingly dropped.

⁹⁹ Lt. H. C. N. Winkworth, 20th Bn. Building apprentice; of Annandale, N.S.W.; b. Leichhardt, N.S.W., 1 May 1896.

¹⁰⁰ Sgt. A. A. A. Davis, M.M. (No. 458; 20th Bn.). Labourer; of Arncliffe, N.S.W.; b. Arncliffe, 6 June 1894. Died of wounds, 15 July 1918.

¹⁰¹ A veteran of the Sudan and South African campaigns.

CHAPTER IV

VILLE-SUR-ANCRE

THE narrative now comes to an action in which the reader may perhaps be the more interested because of the fact that the company of the 21st Battalion¹ which, ten days earlier, he watched from the brewery window at Querrieu, played a vigorous part in it.

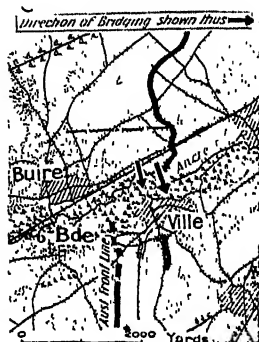
The attack was designed partly to shorten the line with a view to saving troops, partly to deal the enemy a blow from a favourable position. But it was also hoped that by weakening his position in the Morlancourt basin the attack might hamper the arrangements for the next great German offensive, if this was launched, as many of the leaders now expected, within a day or two immediately north of the Australian Corps, between Albert and Arras.

On the night of May 14th the German artillery was unusually active on the whole front. Next day the Ville operations, previously intended for the night of the 15th, were postponed by higher command, but Maj.-General Smyth was warned that they might have to be carried out at forty-eight hours' notice as a counter-stroke if the German offensive was launched in the meantime. On May 16th he was told to prepare to assault on the night of the 18th.²

¹ Lt. Sullivan's.

² THE ALLONVILLE DISASTER. About this time, according to the intelligence summary (dated May 17) of the 190th German Div. then holding Ville, the Germans captured prisoners who disclosed that headquarters of the 3rd Aust. Div. were at Allonville. They also said that brigade headquarters were at Franyillers and a camp at La Houssoye. The result might well be a warning to all captured men against giving any information, or even talking of such things among themselves. On the night of May 30 German artillery, firing high bursting shrapnel shells, was ranged on to Allonville by an aeroplane which, after the fourth shell, dropped coloured flares indicating that the range was correct. In the small hours of May 31 a high velocity gun fired a high explosive shell at about five minute intervals into the village. At that date the 4th Div., which had taken the place of the 3rd in the rest area, had its headquarters and part of the 4th Bde. in the village. Two companies of the 14th Bn. were quartered in two immense barns, adjoining that used as a picture theatre for the 4th Divisional "Smart Set" of pierrots. The third or fourth shell burst in one of these barns bringing down one of the beams supporting the roof and causing the whole roof and part of the walls to collapse on the sleeping company. According to the history of the 14th

The attack would be made chiefly by the 6th Brigade, then holding the valley of the Ancre. Brig.-Genl. Paton had been preparing his plans since the 10th. His proposal was for a night attack (in the small hours, between moonset and dawn) to push past both sides of the village, not, at first, attempting to enter it. The 6th Brigade's front north and south of the village had already edged forward, patrols of the 24th Battalion stealing ground on the flats north of the Ancre during the night of May 12th,³ and those of the 22nd on the next night pushing forward on the foot of the spur south of the river. It would be an easy task to swing a company farther forward north of the Ancre; but to mask the village on that flank by establishing another company on the southern bank was much more difficult, and the commanders decided to accomplish it by bridging the stream, which here ran through No-Man's Land, and throwing this company across it from the north.



South of the village, where the main advance would take place, the task was fairly extensive: General Paton saw that no force could hope to hold Ville without first capturing most of the wide cross-spur which rose south of it and which had been the objective of the 3rd Division's advance on March 28th.⁴ The chief burden of the attack upon this would fall to the right battalion (22nd) of the brigade. It would have to capture in succession the two sunken roads (the Little and the Big Caterpillars) which, with a quarter of a mile between them, ran parallel up the western and eastern sides of the spur

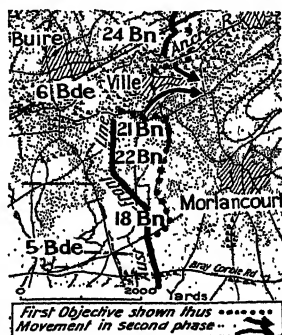
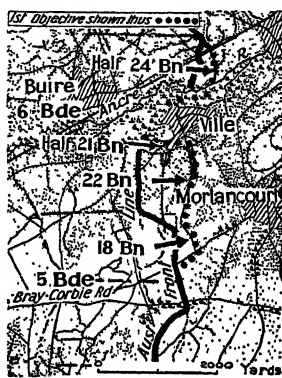
Bn. by Mr. Newton Wanliss, a careful and accurate record, this shell killed thirteen men and wounded 56—the most costly shell-burst in the history of the A.I.F. The next crashed into the neighbouring barn and, exploding on the floor, killed 5 and wounded 12 of the other company. The occurrence inflicted a terrible shock, but some very brave rescue work was done. Of the wounded, one, with both legs cut off above the knee, said to the rescuers: "I'm all right—get the badly wounded boys out." Another whose arm was shattered would not let his friends light his cigarette—"I'll have to learn to do it with one hand," he said, "may as well begin now!"

³ A couple of posts had also been established on the northern bank of the river, facing across it.

⁴ See Vol. V, pp. 214-24.

respectively and here served the Germans for their front- and main-line defences. Higher up the spur part of the 18th Battalion (5th Brigade) would, in accordance with Col. Murphy's desire, push forward to the southern extension of the Big Caterpillar on top of the plateau. On the lower (or left) flank of the 22nd two companies of the 21st Battalion, advancing behind the 22nd's flank, would drop a line of posts along the flats, so as to protect the 22nd's flank by masking the southern edge of Ville.

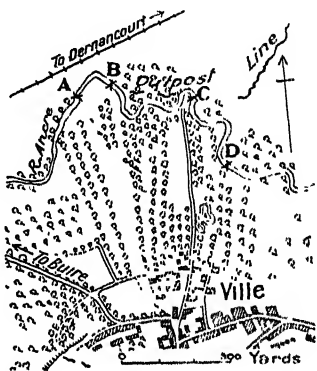
With this accomplished, Ville would have been enclosed on three sides. At 4.15 the artillery fire protecting the 18th and 22nd while they dug in would cease, and patrols would go out farther and steal, if possible, another 200-300 yards of the Morlancourt spur. It was believed that the village was strongly garrisoned, and there was no intention of fighting in it; throughout the attack it would be muffled by barrages laid round its nearer edges, and even when the advance ended it would continue to be shelled at intervals for several hours.⁵ But between 6.30 and 7.30 a.m., after the troops had been given ample time to establish themselves in their objectives on either flank, the artillery fire would be lifted from the village and patrols from the 21st and 23rd Battalions would attempt to enter it from south and north respectively. Ultimately it was to be secured by establishing an outpost-line beyond it—the masking company of the 24th swinging forward its posts on the north and the screen of the 21st Battalion doing the same on the south, the two meeting



⁵ There would be pauses of a quarter of an hour at 4.15 and half an hour at 5.15.

beyond the town; but the question of when this should be done was left to Brig.-Genl. Paton to decide—it might not be undertaken until the following night.

The most elaborate part of the plan concerned the bridging of the stream. One light, ready-made footbridge was to be provided for each platoon of the company that was to cross—two of the bridges ("A" and "B") were to be placed across the river behind the flank of the Australian posts during the night preceding that of the attack; but the two others ("C" and "D"), which would lie close to enemy posts on the southern bank—one of them, indeed, within biscuit throw—would not be set in position until immediately before the operation. All would be manufactured and laid by engineers of the 6th Field Company. The width of the stream having been carefully measured at many points on May 13th by



Lieut. Carleton,⁶ four light arched footbridges were made, each thirty feet long, and consisting of six wooden chesses bound together and trussed.⁷ The battalion holding the northern sector of the brigade's front was to furnish covering parties. The artillery barrage for the whole operation was to be provided by seven brigades of field artillery.⁸ The two Caterpillars, the trenches at the Crucifix and cemetery south of the village, and other defences as well as Ville itself were frequently shelled by the heavy artillery or the Newton mortars. Differently from the plan of many previous Australian attacks, there would be a preliminary bombardment of the village, the Caterpillars, and

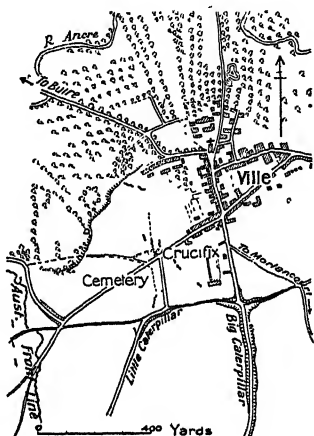
⁶ Lt. C. R. Carleton, M.C.; 6th Field Coy., Engrs. Architectural draughtsman; of Canterbury, Vic.; b. Auburn, Vic., 6 Mar. 1892.

⁷ See plate at p. 128.

⁸ The 108th and 189th (Army) Bdes., R.F.A., the 4th and 5th Bdes. (2nd Div.), and 3rd and 6th (Army) Bdes., A.F.A., and a brigade of the 18th Div. north of the river. Of these, the 108th and 189th had been forming the division's right group; the 4th and 5th the left group; the 3rd was normally superimposed on them, and the 6th was, before the action, in reserve. One brigade would cover the attack north of the village, five the attack south of it, and one would muffle the village.

the Crucifix by the heavy artillery and Newton mortars not merely at intervals during the nights (from May 13th) preceding the attack, but also for five minutes before the assault was launched. These places would also have been shelled with gas on the previous day. It was anticipated that the enemy would assume the final five minutes' bombardment to be merely a repetition of this routine, and would not take it as a signal of immediate attack. The barrage of the field-guns would then fall for two minutes on its starting-line, 250 yards ahead of the waiting infantry, after which it would creep forward at the general rate of 100 yards in three minutes.⁹ The heavy artillery and Newtons would continue their fire on the Caterpillars, Crucifix, or village to the latest moment allowed by the infantry's advance. To screen the troops digging in, at one hour after the start smoke-shells would be thrown upon the hill east of Morlancourt and the approaches to Ville and Dernancourt. Thirty-three Vickers machine-guns would support the attack, four of them as well as some Stokes mortars moving with the 6th brigade, the remainder sprinkling with their fire selected back areas during the first three hours of the fight.

On the night of May 14th, the operation being then planned for the following night, the battalions (22nd and 24th) allotted for the attack south and north of the village were relieved in the front line by the 21st and 23rd. After dark the bridges were carted by the 6th Field Company along the road from Buire towards Dernancourt up to a point 300 yards from where the first of them was to be laid. Thence a section of the com-



⁹ The general rate of fire was three rounds per gun per minute during the creeping barrage, later shrinking to one round per gun per minute for the protective barrage while the troops dug in. In the machine-gun barrage each gun fired 70 rounds per minute in the first ten minutes, and 100 rounds per gun per minute for the next hour and fifty minutes. The machine-guns fired 340,000 rounds on barrage, 11,750 per gun.

pany carried them to the borrow-pit beside the railway. By 11 p.m. the parties of infantry to cover the placing of the first two bridges ("A" and "B") were lying out, but, as the moon was still bright, the bridges were not carried to the river until nearly midnight. Lieut. Davies¹⁰ and his sappers were on the point of launching them when word arrived that the whole attack was postponed. The bridges were taken back to the borrow-pit and hidden under leaves and grass.

Three nights later (May 17th-18th) the first night's programme was again undertaken. Davies and his eight sappers

The bridges carried the two bridges to the river to which the covering party of the 23rd Battalion went before them. Lewis gunners in the posts had the special duty of silencing any German machine-gun likely to interfere and of suppressing the enemy flare-throwers. The bridges were duly placed, and immediately afterwards a patrol crossed and posts were established 100 yards ahead of each bridge, to protect them from enemy patrols until the following night.

May 18th was the drowsy day during which, on the plateau, Irvine and his scouts raided their sleeping opponents. The heat culminated about 4 o'clock in a thunderstorm, bringing a torrent of rain and hail. The sky quickly cleared, but many of the trenches, British and German, were flooded a foot or more deep and the water was still there on the next day. The war diary of the Fourth Army says:

During May 18, owing to the unauthorised construction of a bathing pool lower down stream, the river rose considerably and threatened at one time to carry two bridges away, and it was only late in the day that this occurrence was discovered and remedied.¹¹

The attack was to be launched at 2 the next morning.¹² During the afternoon the commander of the 24th Battalion asked that a slight alteration should be made in the sites of the two bridges to be set in position that night. It was 7.45 p.m. before the question was finally settled. The result was that this night the Lewis gunners who were to suppress enemy machine-gunners and flare-throwers did not know where the

¹⁰ Lt. (tempy. Capt.) E. H. Davies, M.C.; 6th Field Coy. Engrs. Surveyor; of Caulfield, Vic.; b. Brighton, Vic., 6 Nov. 1891. Died 12 Nov. 1920.

¹¹ Presumably the bridges referred to were those placed on the previous night; there is no mention of this in the Australian records.

¹² The moon would set at 2.10 and dawn begin at about 4.

bridges were to be placed. In addition, the order from brigade headquarters to the covering parties was delayed, and, in spite of hurry, these parties were late in going out. The officers in charge of them, Lieuts. Weir¹³ and Hepburn,¹⁴ of the 23rd, who had arranged with Lieut. Davies to place the nearer bridge ("C") first, reconnoitred its site and, on getting back at 11.45 p.m., found that the engineers had meanwhile moved off to set this bridge in position without them. Davies had waited until the last moment to which he felt the task could be postponed with a certainty of getting it finished before "zero" hour, and had then led forward his party with the bridge, at the same time sending two of his men, L.-Corpl. Hammond¹⁵ and Sapper Randall,¹⁶ to cross one of the previous night's bridges and, working along the opposite river-bank, to act as covering party and assist in pulling the bridge across. But on their way along the southern bank the two men ran into a German patrol which threw bombs and wounded both of them. Hammond took his mate to the nearest stretcher-bearers and then tried to carry out the task himself. He was again attacked and wounded, and was nearly cut off, but swam the river and reached the bridging party with news of what had happened. Davies went ahead with the launching, set the bridge in position, and then himself crossed it and lay out to cover his sappers while they completed the work.

Owing to the occurrence of this skirmish and the enemy's alertness, Davies expected trouble in placing bridge "D." Earlier in the evening he had reconnoitred its proposed site, and detecting a German machine-gun near by on the opposite bank had decided, if possible, to have it placed a little nearer to the old front line. It was already late, and at this stage a verbal message from Lieut.-Col. James¹⁷ of the 24th Battalion arrived, informing him that, if the task was dangerous and

¹³ Lt. M. J. W. Weir, 23rd Bn. Clerk; of Dunedin, N.Z., and Melbourne; b. Dunedin, 1892. Died of wounds, 18 Aug. 1918.

¹⁴ Lt. A. Hepburn, 23rd Bn. Bank clerk; of Melbourne; b. East Melbourne, 6 Sep. 1893.

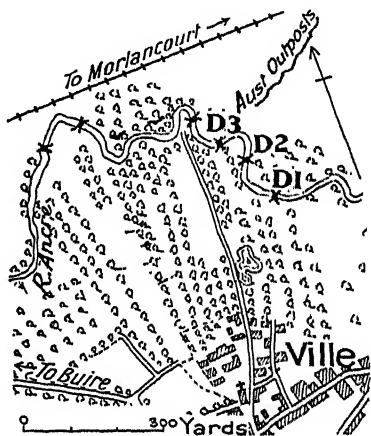
¹⁵ L.-Cpl. J. H. Hammond, D.C.M. (No. 13953; 6th Field Coy., Engrs.). Plumber and seaman; of Brisbane, Q'land; b. St. John's, New Brunswick, Canada, 1871.

¹⁶ Spr. H. S. Randall (No. 16633; 6th Field Coy., Engrs.). Pattern maker; of Stanmore, N.S.W.; b. Chatham, Eng., 27 Oct. 1889.

¹⁷ Col. W. E. James, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 24th Bn., 1917-19. Orchardist; of Harcourt, Vic.; b. Harcourt, 12 Apr. 1882.

difficult, three bridges would suffice. Brigade headquarters, it was added, had been consulted and had agreed. But the spirit implanted years before in this brigade by its first and most famous commander, John Gellibrand, was still working. Davies reflected that, even if three bridges might do at a pinch, the infantry would be better served by four, and he decided to place the fourth bridge at the site chosen by himself. L.-Corpl. Leathbridge,¹⁸ who had accompanied him on his reconnaissance, would guide the covering party. But the covering party could not be found. The one for bridge "C" had by this time established a post there, but the party for bridge "D" in its turn missed the engineers. It was therefore decided to arrange for a "scratch" party.

At 1.15 the improvised covering party was not ready, and only three-quarters of an hour remained for the work. Davies now put it to his sappers that they should carry on without cover, and they agreed. On their approaching the site he himself, again scouting ahead, caught the sound of Germans on the other bank. Shots were fired at him, and, seeing the hopelessness of placing the bridge there, he decided to try still another spot, less than 100 yards away round a bend of the stream. A German flare shot up. The party was seen; machine-guns opened, and two men, Sappers Walker¹⁹ and Washington,²⁰ were mor-



D1—Bridge site as ordered.
D2—Site chosen by Davies.
D3—Actual position of bridge.

¹⁸ Cpl. E. Leathbridge (No. 3297; 6th Field Coy., Engrs.). Butter maker; of Newstead, Vic.; b. Muckleford, Vic., 18 Apr. 1894.

¹⁹ Spr. H. C. Walker (No. 16475; 6th Field Coy., Engrs.). Electrical engineer; of Brisbane, Q'land; b. Greta, N.S.W., 19 Oct. 1887. Died of wounds, 19 May 1918. Walker had accompanied Davies and Leathbridge on their patrol.

²⁰ Spr. C. R. Washington (No. 16643; 6th Field Coy., Engrs.). Water meter reader; of Moore Park, Sydney; b. Ascot Vale, Vic., 28 Aug. 1893. Died of wounds, 19 May 1918.

tally wounded. The rest hurried on with the work, and had pushed the bridge across, but had not erected it, when the machine-gun again fired, wounding two more. As only seven were now left in the party, barely enough to clear the wounded, and as the bridge, even as it was, could be crossed, Davies withdrew his men and informed the 24th Battalion of its location. Lieut. Weir, who by this time had gone forward with his covering party and lay out near the original site, again missed the engineers and only learned of the true position of the bridge when, just before dawn, he and his men withdrew.

Meanwhile the infantry for the attack had assembled without the enemy's showing any suspicion of its imminence.

To begin with the operation north of Ville. The northern of the assaulting companies of the 24th Battalion, Capt. Ball's,²¹ had edged out as far as possible before the starting hour and encountered no difficulty in swinging forward to its intended line. Its success signal was seen at 2.35.

The southern company, which was to cross the river and mask the village, was under one of the best known fighting leaders of the brigade, Capt. Mahony, an original private of the battalion; most of his officers, also, were Gallipoli men who had won their commissions from the ranks. Of these Lieut. Munro²² was to lead Mahony's left platoon across the last-placed bridge, but Col. James had given orders that, if this bridge was unfinished, the platoon should take position near the northern bank, and, by firing across at the German posts known to exist on the southern side, protect the left of the next platoon. That platoon, under Lieut. Edgerton,²³ also a



²¹ Maj. A. A. Ball, D.C.M.; 24th Bn. Broker; of Brighton, Vic.; b. South Yarra, Vic., 21 June 1892.

²² Lt. G. E. B. Munro, 24th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Garden Vale, Vic.; b. Alfredton, Vic., 8 Dec. 1891. Died of wounds, 22 May 1918.

²³ Lt. E. H. D. Edgerton, D.S.O., M.M.; 24th Bn. Student; of Caulfield, Vic.; b. Moonee Ponds, Vic., 1 Apr. 1897. Killed in action, 12 Aug. 1918.

Gallipoli man, and the right platoons, under Lieut. Kopsen,²⁴ would already have crossed their respective bridges and, when the barrage fell, would push on and, after digging in on the northern outskirts of the village, would await the final order to swing eastwards and enclose it. The duty of entering the village to see if it was clear was not theirs; this would be undertaken—from the north, by the trained raiding-team of the 23rd Battalion, which also would cross the Ancre and lie up near the forward edge of the trees slightly to Kopsen's right; and from the south-west and south by patrols from the two attacking companies of the 21st.

Lieut. Munro, leading the easternmost platoon of the company, had not heard that the engineers had been forced at the last moment to change the site of his bridge. He searched for it, but, being overturned, it was not easy to find. The German machine-guns on the opposite bank, which had made the launching so deadly for the engineers, were sweeping the ground, and Munro was mortally wounded. His sergeant, J. M. Collery,²⁵ taking charge, then followed the alternative laid down in his orders and distributed the men on the northern side of the stream in three posts, the Lewis gunners keeping down the fire of the German posts on the opposite side while these parties dug in. When daylight came the snipers in these posts—in particular Sergt. Cumming²⁶—kept up a deadly fire upon Germans who could occasionally be seen among the trees across the river. A number of German dead were afterwards found there.

The leader of the next platoon, Lieut. Edgerton, had been taken across the third bridge at midnight by Lieut. Weir, and had relieved the covering party on the southern side. Waiting for the start the platoon lay on a little peninsula between two reaches of the river, astride of a path leading straight between the trees to Ville, a quarter of a mile away. At 2 o'clock, when the uproar of the barrage started, it advanced in two

²⁴ Lt. E. W. Kopsen, 24th Bn. Shipping clerk; of Strathfield, N.S.W.; b. Suva, Fiji, 3 Jan. 1884. (Kopsen was an army service corps man who had transferred to the infantry in the winter of 1916-17.)

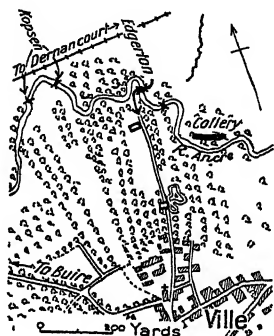
²⁵ Sgt. J. M. Collery, M.M. (No. 4388; 24th Bn.). Labourer; of Katamatite, Vic.; b. Romsey, Vic., 16 Apr. 1896.

²⁶ Sgt. J. Cumming (No. 2232; 24th Bn.). Cream depot manager; of Katunga, Vic.; b. Bridgewater-on-Loddon, Vic., 10 Nov. 1891. Killed in action, 2 Sep. 1918.

parties. The darkness was intense, but a man could be seen at ten yards, and the party to the right of the road immediately ran upon a German machine-gun post. A lance-corporal rushed it, and while the Germans were getting at their gun he shot one of them. His rifle jammed before the second shot, but he at once dived at the gun. The two Germans fumbling at it surrendered. Another was bayoneted by Sergt. White,²⁷ several ran off followed by shots, and this post, which could have blocked the narrow approach, was taken.

Meanwhile Edgerton and the left party were walking straight along each side of the track. When only fifty yards from the village a voice challenged them in German. Edgerton and his batman, a Russian named Blankenberg,²⁸ at once threw two bombs in the direction of the sound, and half a dozen stick-grenades burst about them in reply. Four men were wounded, and this post too could have stopped the advance—there was water on one flank of it and an orchard hedge on the other. But by the sounds Edgerton knew that the Germans were running away. His orders were to take position a little to the east of this, but that area was a lake, and before seeking a way round he withdrew his men twenty yards and posted them on either side of the track facing the village.

In the meantime Lieut. Kopsen's two platoons, which earlier in the night had crossed by bridges A and B, had an almost unimpeded progress except for the loss of three men who were hit by some machine-gun at first unseen in the general disturbance. In five parties spreading fan-wise they advanced south-east. They made their way in the dark through the marsh and within half an hour four of them were digging in as best they could in their allotted position. The leader of

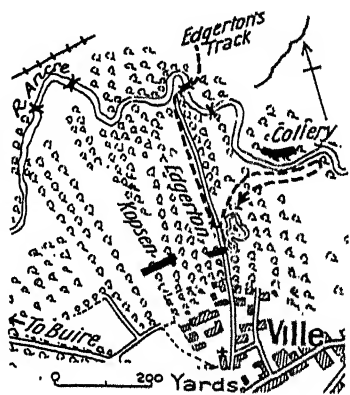


²⁷ Lt. E. V. White, D.C.M.; 24th Bn. Butcher; of Dromana, Vic.; b. Dromana, 22 Mar. 1894.

²⁸ Pte. J. W. Blankenberg, M.M. (No. 4363; 24th Bn.). Seaman; of Melbourne; b. Riga, Russia, 1891. Killed in action, 5 Oct. 1918.

Kopsen's left-flank party, however, found it impossible to entrench in the wet ground, and therefore attached himself to Edgerton's platoon on dryer ground to his left. As Kopsen's runner, Pte Holloway,²⁹ was going round to acquaint himself with the exact position of all these posts, a machine-gun very close to him began to fire. Holloway saw that it was in a small breastwork, evidently containing Germans. He fell flat and, when a head appeared over the breastwork, shot the man with his revolver. He then rushed the post and shot two others, but found that a fourth had slipped away in the dark, carrying the gun. Holloway returned and told Kopsen, who presently found the gun set ready in the open, and the German walking about looking for ammunition for it. Kopsen captured first the man and then his gun.

The posts of Mahony's company thus early formed a screen north of the village, but Edgerton was not as far east as his orders directed, and accordingly, with his batman as companion, went out to see if he could pass the intervening lake by going along the river-bank. As he made his way he heard and saw a machine-gun ahead of him busily firing across the stream at Sergt. Collery's platoon north of it. Edgerton and his companion had only one bomb left; but he took the chance, threw the bomb, and, under cover of its burst, dashed for the post. When he was five yards away the Germans began to put out their heads again.



The first was shot by Edgerton and his Russian, and the remainder surrendered. After bursting a German bomb in the trench to make sure that the whole garrison had left it, Edgerton sent the prisoners and the machine-gun in charge of Blankenberg and a wounded man back to Captain Mahony with word

²⁹ Pte. R. Holloway, M.M. (No. 2380; 24th Bn.). Fisherman; of Brighton Beach, Vic., b. Brighton Beach, 1892. Died 21 June 1922.

of his doings and position. He then went out again with the gunners of his left party, and, pushing on past the post which he had just captured, attacked with German grenades a further post along the river-bank. The burst of three German bombs caused its garrison to cower in their shelter, and they were easily captured. Edgerton now led his party south from the river, wading through the flooded meadow in search of his objective; but the water became so deep that, after losing one of his puttees in the mud, he recognised that he could not get through. He accordingly returned and placed a post covering the strip of dry bank along the river which he had found to be the only possible approach from the flank. Even there the party found water on digging to the depth of a foot, and a breastwork was therefore built.

The history of the 247th R.I.R. (54th Res. Divn.), which till then held the Dernancourt sector, states that in the early hours its flank company saw "a fairly strong line of 'English' riflemen" in the old German positions north of Ville. The Company "opened fire. Thereupon the Tommies disappeared." This may possibly refer to the operations of the engineers or covering party, for Munro's and Edgerton's platoons held on in the positions taken.

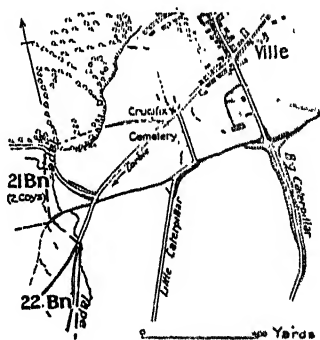
It is evidence of Edgerton's energy and capacity that this was all well finished before 3.30, when the light began to grow. In the half-light at that hour a party of five men was seen coming along the track from the village to bridge "C." Edgerton in his post there cried: "Halt—who are you?" Silence followed, so the challenge was repeated. The reply came in German. The post fired; the five men vanished. Apparently none was hit. Presumably they were a patrol for a very hot sniping fire was presently opened on this post from the houses in the village, close above it and only 100 yards away. The Victorians replied, firing from behind trees. Edgerton's wounded men had previously been laid behind trees waiting for stretcher-bearers, and two of them were now killed by the German fire. Edgerton felt that his front was safe, but to make sure of his flank he went out with L.-Corpl. Johnson,³⁰ reconnoitring along the river-bank. He found there nothing moving—only a few

³⁰ Cpl. D. W. Johnson, M.M. (No. 5362; 24th Bn.). Labourer; of Melbourne; b. Delegate, N.S.W., 1890.

dead Germans, the result of the fire of Collery's men across the river.

At this stage the post on the track heard fighting in the village. This was evidently a consequence of the attack farther south, to which the narrative must now turn.

The progress of the southern attack depended entirely on the success of the 22nd Battalion, which was responsible for its centre, and had to advance across the spur that screened Morlancourt and seize the two sunken roads (Little and Big Caterpillars) on the way. The 22nd lined out on the western slope of the spur on a tape previously laid by Lieut. Gillespie³¹ of the 6th Field Company. It was known that a line of German posts would be met at each of these roads, and other posts where the flats met the lower slope—especially at the Crucifix and cemetery on either side of the Ville-Corbie road where an extension of the Little Caterpillar ran into it. To facilitate the capture of these last, a detached patrol of the 22nd under Lieut. Madden³² would advance ahead of the 21st, out on the left flank, and attack them from the north.



Like the attack by the 9th Brigade on May 5th, this advance was made by a force very much thinner than those employed in previous years in attacking more densely garrisoned and elaborately entrenched positions. The 22nd Battalion, advancing with four companies in line in two waves on a 1,500 yards' front, had barely a man to ten yards in its first wave, and the second wave, following twenty yards behind in sections in single file, was equally light.³³ At this stage the barrage was

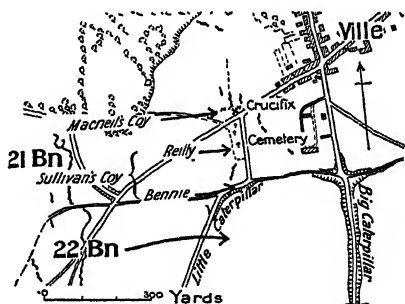
³¹ Capt. R. Gillespie, 6th Field Coy., Engrs. Surveyor; of Croydon, N.S.W.; b. Quirindi, N.S.W., 13 June 1890.

³² Lt. N. J. Madden, M.C.; 22nd Bn. Grocer; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Marcus Hill, Vic., 17 Mar. 1895. Killed in action, 18 Aug. 1918.

³³ The right centre company was especially weak, having had 15 men hit by a single unlucky shell-burst as the company was leaving Ribemont.

excellent. The moment it began flares shot up from the whole front attacked, and for a few minutes both the village and the crop-land were illuminated by them. Except in the village they quickly ceased, but objects ahead were still well silhouetted against the flashes of the bursting shells, or of the big Newton bombs in the village. Few advanced posts were met—the first a post on the left, half-way to the Little Caterpillar. Its machine-gun, firing straight ahead, caused damage in Lieut. Westaway's³⁴ platoon. But by now the men were skilled in tackling such obstacles. The platoon dropped down. Its Lewis gunners, thirty yards to the left, opened fire. The heads of the Germans disappeared below the parapet. The Lewis gunners rose and made for the post, hosing it with their gun at the hip. The German machine-gunners were killed, Westaway himself shooting the last of them.

At the Little Caterpillar, though it formed a deep obstacle, few of the enemy stayed to fight. While the barrage was still on it, Lieut. Bennie (leading the southernmost platoon of the two companies of the 21st that were to guard the 22nd's flank³⁵), crept up with Corpl. McLachlan³⁶ to the top of the neighbouring bank and found a machine-gun already abandoned by its crew. But farther north, at the cemetery, where an extension of the Little Caterpillar debouched above the flats, and just beyond that, where the Crucifix with its three trees stood on the southern edge of the mustard crop, machine-guns were chattering, and here there was more resistance. The Germans had outpost trenches at both places, and Lieut. Reilly's³⁷ platoon (the left of the same company) was



³⁴ Lt. H. W. Westaway, 22nd Bn. Solicitor's clerk; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Geelong, 28 Feb. 1892. Killed in action, 18 Aug. 1918.

³⁵ The right platoon of the "Brewery" Company (Sullivan's).

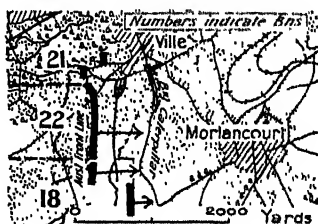
³⁶ Cpl. W. D. McLachlan (No. 5057; 21st Bn.). Farmer; of Traralgon, Vic.; b. Mornington, Vic., 1 Apr. 1897. Killed in action, 19 May 1918.

³⁷ Lt. A. E. Reilly, M.M.; 21st Bn. Farmer; of Kerang, Vic.; b. Lancefield, Vic., 2 Sep. 1886.

stopped for some minutes by Germans firing from the cemetery. As Reilly and his men crept forward through its hedge the Germans disappeared, carrying their machine-gun—a result possibly brought about by the appearance to their rear of Lieut. Madden's detached patrol of the 22nd. Farther to the left Capt. Macneil's company³⁸ of the 21st met more stubborn resistance at the trenches near the Crucifix, where, though the company was closely following the barrage, some German machine-gunners managed to open fire when the platoons of the 21st were only ten yards away. Lieuts. English³⁹ and Besemeres⁴⁰ were immediately hit, but the positions were rushed. Another machine-gun near by was found abandoned—its crew had apparently run off on the approach of Madden's patrol or of the 21st. It was to this point that the left company of the 21st was to extend its line covering the flank of the 22nd south of Ville. This company had been for four days in the front trenches, lining the bank above the marshes, looking out over the mustard field at the village and Crucifix, and had studied the ground minutely. Its N.C.O's, now stepping into the place of their officers, set their men to dig their portion of the flank defence, astride of the road leading from the south-west into Ville.

Meanwhile the 22nd, with Sullivan's company of the 21st following immediately in rear of its flank, was moving towards the Big Caterpillar behind the barrage which reached that road less than twenty

minutes after the start. Here at a few points the resistance was serious. On the right Capt. Hunter,⁴¹ company commander, was hit and some confusion had occurred. Sergt.



³⁸ Lt.-Col. A. R. Macneil, M.C.; 21st Bn. Ironmonger; of Balwyn, Vic.; b. Camberwell, Vic., 27 Feb. 1894.

³⁹ Lt. J. G. English, 21st Bn. Commercial traveller; of Brighton, Vic.; b. Renfrew, Scotland, 10 Aug. 1884.

⁴⁰ Lt. B. Besemeres, 21st Bn. Chemist; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat East, 2 Mar. 1896.

⁴¹ Capt. W. R. Hunter, 22nd Bn. Clerk; of Windsor, Vic.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 10 June 1888.

Ruthven,⁴² who was acting as Hunter's company sergeant-major, grasped the situation, got the men in order, and took control of the company. When it reached the Big Caterpillar a machine-gun, opening thirty or forty yards ahead, stopped the advance. Seeing that the stoppage might be serious, Ruthven ran forward to bomb-range, threw a bomb, which burst near the gun, and then, helped by the temporary disturbance, rushed to the gun, bayoneted one of its crew, and captured it. By this time other Germans in the sunken road were coming out of their shelters in the road-bank. Ruthven shot two, and the infantry reaching the road found him there with six other Germans and two machine-guns captured.⁴³ A quarter of a mile farther down the slope, where the Big Caterpillar was deeper, another German machine-gunner from the top edge of the bank kept back the infantry for a short time at forty yards' distance. Here Lieut. Abercrombie,⁴⁴ a well-known cricketer of Ballarat, throwing a bomb (as one account says) "with a regular cricket-ball shy," hit the gunner on the side of the head, the explosion also damaging the gun. The deep road was rushed. Farther down its banks were deeper still, the nearer side pitted along the top with niches covered with English waterproof sheets. Many of the Germans in these had been sleeping with their boots and equipment off, and few attempted to resist. The Victorians called on them to come out of the holes, and, if there were no reply, turned their Lewis guns on the sheets. The prisoners were immediately sent off to the rear—at least one of them indicated that he himself knew the way and started off, waving good-bye.

At the bottom of the slope Reilly's and Sergt. Lyon's⁴⁵ platoons of Sullivan's company of the 21st struck out from the cemetery across the flats towards Ville, and sixty yards from the nearest houses took up their positions as part of the flank-guard. The other two, slipping down the bank of the Little Caterpillar, advanced south of the village along the

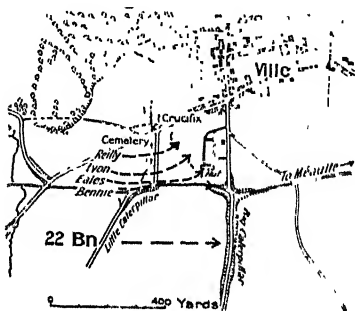
⁴² Lt. W. Ruthven, V.C.; 22nd Bn. Engineer; of Collingwood, Vic.; b. Collingwood, 21 May 1893.

⁴³ For this and his other actions on this day, he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

⁴⁴ Lt. P. J. Abercrombie, M.C.; 22nd Bn. Clerk; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Yarram, Vic., 1 Jan. 1884.

⁴⁵ Sgt. J. A. S. Lyon, M.M. (No. 20; 21st Bn.). Clerk; of Brunswick, Vic.; b. Brunswick, 12 Mar. 1894.

Méaulte road which both of the Caterpillars crossed. In this, fifty yards beyond the Little Caterpillar, Lieut. Bennie⁴⁶ leading his men found another machine-gun posted, its crew twenty yards farther on sheltering against the roadside. A mere threat with his revolver sent them hurrying of their own accord to the Australian rear as prisoners. "Parti, Missoor!" cried one, as he went. Another twenty yards ahead Lieut. Eales⁴⁷ shouted to Bennie that he could see, down in the low crop on his left, the shed which he knew to be his objective. He turned off towards it with his platoon while Bennie held straight on. Bennie could see that the 22nd, on top of the bank on his right, was swinging off to the south, and realised that his own platoon would have to tackle any Germans found in the cutting of the Méaulte road, which continued between banks for a quarter of a mile beyond the deep opening of the Big Caterpillar. He passed this opening without trouble and went straight on, himself leading a party along the left of the road while Corpl. McLachlan led another along the foot of the right bank. All the way there were Germans sheltering in "funk-holes" in the banks, but none attempted to resist. They put up their hands as soon as they were routed out, and were sent to the rear to be handed over to the first person that could be persuaded to receive them, the escorts then hurrying back to rejoin their beloved platoon. At length the cutting ran out into the open wheatfield near the northern entrance to the Morlancourt pan. As this was neared, eight Germans suddenly ran across into the field, escaping from Ville towards Morlancourt. Bennie's men followed them to the crop but could not catch them.



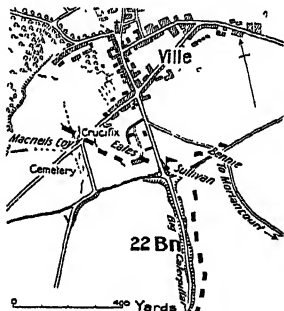
Bennie was here at the farthest point to be attained even by

⁴⁶ Bennie (as noted in the first chapter) was an engine-driver; his company commander, Sullivan, a young law clerk.

⁴⁷ Lt. T. W. Eales, D.C.M.; 21st Bn. Law clerk; of Lilydale, Vic.; b. Camberwell, Vic., 25 Jan. 1896. Killed in action, 19 May 1918.

"exploitation"—the road-crossing 250 yards beyond the Big Caterpillar. It was at this point that the left of the 22nd—if it could steal the additional ground—was to establish the northern outpost in the advanced line. Bennie stationed a post thirty yards north-east of the crossing and another some distance to the west, forming the easternmost section of the flank-guard. Meanwhile, finding that resistance had ceased, Sergt. Ruthven and other company commanders along the 22nd's line had placed their men in similar posts slightly to the east of the Big Caterpillar (which all realised would be shelled during the following day).

It was then about 2.35 a.m. Two machine-guns of the 6th Company under Lieut. Jeffery,⁴⁸ and two Stokes mortars under Lieut. Tomkin,⁴⁹ had duly arrived with all their accompanying ammunition⁵⁰ at the northern end of the Big Caterpillar. Farther south, up the hill, Lieut. Hopper⁵¹ placed another two guns of the 6th Machine Gun Company overlooking the Morlancourt pan.⁵² The company and platoon commanders of the infantry were busy getting contact with commanders on their flanks. Bennie, after finding Eales behind his, sought out Capt. MacKinnon,⁵³ on his right, and found him out near the cross-road to Morlancourt. They were coming back towards the Caterpillar when a youngster⁵⁴ of Eales's platoon came along the road. "I've had my arm blown off, Mr. Bennie," he said, "and one of your sections has been blown out by a shell."



It was true. The forward half of the line of the 21st's

⁴⁸ Lt. G. A. Jeffery, 6th M.G. Coy. Sheet metal worker; of South Melbourne; b. South Melbourne, 12 Jan. 1889.

⁴⁹ Lt. W. C. Tomkin, 6th L.T.M. Bty. Motor driver; of Albert Park, Vic.; b. Shepparton, Vic., 20 Aug. 1889.

⁵⁰ That for the Stokes mortars was carried by a platoon of the 21st Bn.

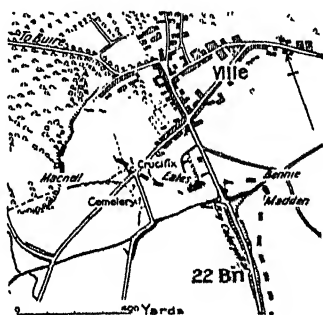
⁵¹ Lt. J. E. Hopper, M.C.; 6th M.G. Coy. Chauffeur; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A. (of English parents), 16 Mar. 1896.

⁵² On his way forward, Hopper was held up by a German post, and rushed it, capturing three men.

⁵³ Capt. N. W. MacKinnon, 22nd Bn. Accountant; of Moonee Ponds, Vic.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 16 Mar. 1887.

⁵⁴ Pte. M. S. Greig (No. 6446; 21st Bn.). Clerk; of St. Kilda, Vic.; b. Albert Park, Vic., 17 July 1895.

flanking posts and the northernmost sections of the 22nd's advanced line were being heavily hit, not by the German artillery but by some of their own guns. Odd shells burst even on the forward lip of the Big Caterpillar, and near Bennie's and Eales's posts on the flat the bursts were continual. Eales, going to Sullivan's headquarters (in the northern continuation of the Big Caterpillar), was killed by one. Sullivan, who had been wounded by a machine-gun but was carrying on his work, was intensely troubled. Bennie's posts had to be brought back 150 yards to the west; MacKinnon stationed the flank post of the 22nd (under Lieut. Madden) 150 yards east of the Big Caterpillar to cover them. Farther to the west Capt. Macneil of the other company of the 21st had heard at 2.20 from Lieut. Besemeres (who came in wounded, helped by a runner) that the flank posts at the Crucifix were without officers. He at once went up to them across the mustard field,⁵⁵ taking with him Lieut. Garton, part of whose platoon was lining the bank on the edge of the swamps. They found that the troops digging in were being worried by a machine-gun firing from a hole in the wall of the nearest house in the village, 100 yards ahead. Two rifle-grenades were forthwith fired through the roof of the house, and after them an egg-bomb. This caused the fire to cease. Macneil, leaving Garton in charge, now walked back in the first dawn to his headquarters and arranged with a trench-mortar officer, whose Stokes gun was behind the bank, to fire ten shots at the house. After the last shot, in the half-light between 3 and 3.30, Lieut. Garton, who had been left in charge of the posts, entered the house with a party and found the gun abandoned by its crew.



In walking back Macneil had also noted that the Germans were sniping from a trench on the bank above the swamps at

⁵⁵ On reaching the Crucifix they passed a German lying with his face on his arm. The runner who guided them knew that this man had not been there when he himself passed before, and accordingly pricked him with a bayonet. The German started to his feet, and afterwards, (says the account of the incident) "could hardly be induced to put his hands down."



8. THE POST ON THE TRACK

Captured by Edgerton north of Ville, 19th May, 1918. The village can be seen on higher ground ahead.

*Aust War Memorial Official Photo No E2478.
Taken on 14th June, 1918.*

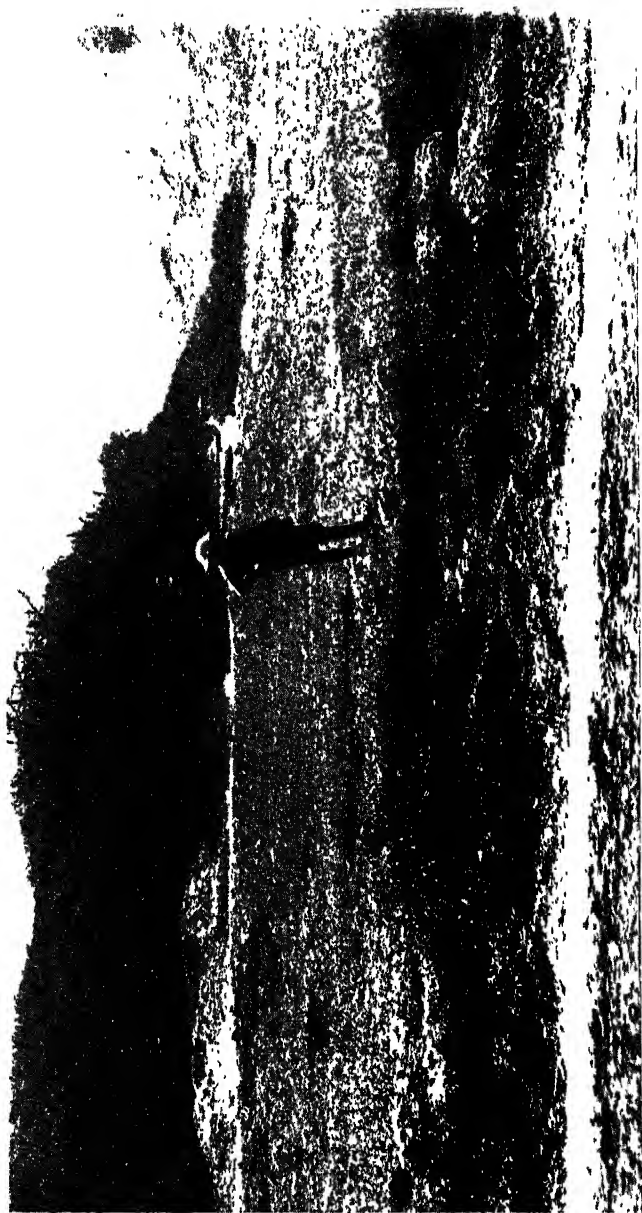


9. THE ANCRE

Showing one of the bridges placed by the 6th Field Company, Australian Engineers. Ville is at the end of the rows of trees.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E2481.
Taken on 14th June, 1918.*

To face p. 128.



10. THE "BIG CATERPILLAR", SOUTH OF VILLE
Sunken road captured by the 6th Brigade, 19th May, 1918

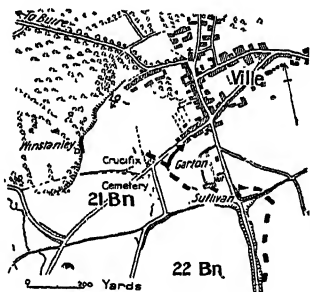
*Asst. Hon. Major General Official Photo, No. E4832.
Taken on 20th May, 1918.*

the north-western corner of the village. He decided that his left platoon under Lieut. Winstanley⁵⁶ should endeavour to oust them. This was about to be done when there arrived from battalion headquarters an order which changed the whole course of the operations.

The reply of the German artillery had thus far been scattered and feeble—sure evidence that the enemy's commanders did not yet know how far the attack had gone.

The fight in Ville

The telephone lines to the old Australian front line were nearly all intact, and the general progress of the assault was known to Brig.-Genl. Paton much more quickly than usual. The first contact airman, an Australian of the 3rd Squadron, A.F.C., flew at 4.20 "coo-eeing" low over the troops who "coo-eed" back. He noted their flares and twenty-five minutes later dropped at divisional headquarters a most accurate map of their line.⁵⁷ But, an hour before this, reports speaking of the slightness of the resistance and the punctual attainment of the objectives had confirmed Paton in his belief that the enemy's morale would be found to be poor, and accordingly at 3.47 he decided to proceed immediately with the attempt to seize the village. The artillery was accordingly ordered to cease shelling Ville at 4.15, and the 21st, 23rd, and 24th Battalions were informed of this and told to attempt forthwith the entry of the village.

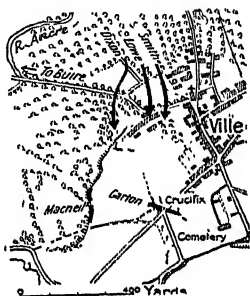


The message reached Capt. Macneil over the telephone at 4.17 and was to be passed by him to Sullivan also. The raiding party of the 23rd, with whom, by his own importunate requests, had gone the signal officer of the battalion, Lieut. Wiltshire, received it on the edge of Ville precisely at 4.15, and was the first to move. It was now plain daylight. The raiders numbered only two officers and twenty-two other ranks, but were a picked team including (as the commander of their

⁵⁶ Lt. F. W. Winstanley, M.M.; 21st Bn. Grocer; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Geelong. 21 Oct. 1894.

⁵⁷ Contact airmen also went out at 5 a.m. and 8 a.m.

battalion said afterwards) some "pretty rough men." During the bombardment they had been waiting in three parties, the right under Sergt. Dixon, centre under Lieut. Lowe⁵⁸ (commanding the whole), and left under a newly promoted leader, Lieut. Smith.⁵⁹ One party was actually sheltering against a house on the edge of Ville while the bombardment was on the village. The swiftness of their start now enabled them to secure a great advantage. Dixon's party (right) circled to the west through the edge of the trees, while those led by Lieuts. Lowe and Smith tackled the Germans from the flank and rear. Within two minutes of the lifting of the barrage they had seized three of the machine-guns defending the north-western edge of Ville—rushing the guns before they could be got into action. A fourth was found abandoned on the road leading to Buire (it was later put into use), and the parties then approached from front and rear the outpost trenches at the north-west corner of the village from which the Germans had been firing on Macneil's company of the 21st.



Macneil had lost no time in getting his company into action. Lieut. Winstanley, who had been about to attack the above-mentioned trenches, was wounded, but Macneil lined out the left half of his company along the bank edging the marshes, platoons and sections under their allotted commanders, and then, at the blast of the commanders' whistles, advanced across the mustard field towards the trenches and the village.⁶⁰ The advance was made at 4.30 in sectional rushes, each section alternately firing to cover the advance while with a shout its neighbour rushed forward. On the left twenty or thirty Germans, started out of the marshes and trees by the advance of the 23rd Battalion, were running back to drop into the trenches or to fire from the nearest houses of the village. Snipers and

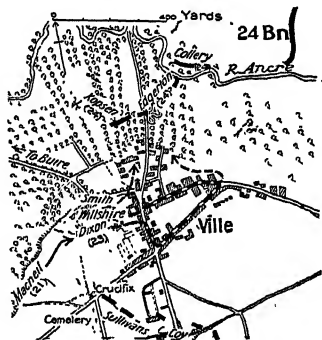
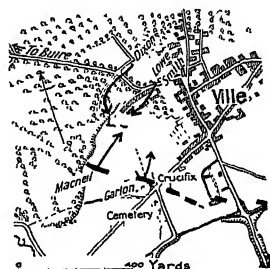
⁵⁸ Lt. T. E. Lowe, M.C.; 23rd Bn. Accountant; of East St. Kilda, Vic.; b. Aberdeen, Scotland, 2 Apr. 1888.

⁵⁹ Lt. P. J. Smith, D.S.O.; 23rd Bn. Blacksmith; of Middle Brighton, Vic.; b. Porepunkah, Vic., 26 Mar. 1897. Died, 1 July 1921.

⁶⁰ The bank from which the attack was made and the objective are shown in the illustration in *Vol. XII* (plate 481).

machine-guns were blazing from the back-hedges. As he passed Garton's platoons in their position near the Crucifix on the right, Macneil told Garton to follow on as second wave. At the same time he directed that the dividing line between his company and Sullivan's should be the southern road through the village. That road would be left to the nearest platoon of Sullivan's company under Lieut. Reilly; Macneil's company would work through the centre of the village with its left at the church, where the 23rd could now be seen. At 4.40, with the cheering 21st now only fifty yards away in front, and the 23rd in flank and rear, the Germans in the trenches gave in; a pick-handle with a white cloth was raised from the corner of their trench, and the garrison was captured; a neighbouring post had just surrendered to the raiders of the 23rd who, seeing the advancing 21st, waved it on into the village and straightway, few though they themselves were, headed down the streets without waiting for it.

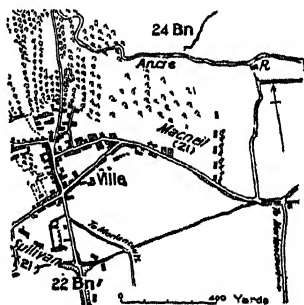
Dixon's party of the raiders made along the southern street, and Lowe's along the central one, while Smith's was to move past the open green, in which stood the church and some bare detached houses, and thence round the northern edge of the village. Smith's party ran at once into the fire of Germans shooting from houses at the north-west corner of the village, and Lowe went to help him, leaving his own party in charge of the eager Wiltshire. It was fired on at first by Germans from houses on the right-hand side of the street, but worked through and presently reached the junction with the southern road where Dixon's party also arrived. Near this point a number of Germans were rallying. The two parties attacked them, killing eight and



setting the rest in flight along the street out of the village. As Lieut. Smith's party had not arrived, the two other parties now turned back along the path skirting the northern edge of Ville to meet it, clearing the houses and cellars on the way.

Meanwhile Macneil's company of the 21st had entered the village and, avoiding the road, was working through the back-gardens on either side, entering every house that seemed likely to have a cellar. The occupants were summoned to come out, and, if the order was not instantly obeyed, a phosphorus bomb was rolled in to smoke or burn them out. From many cellars Germans came out on call. One of the Lewis gunners, Pte. Downing,⁶¹ chased a number of the enemy into a cellar and then entered it alone and drove out of another entrance into the arms of his sergeant a German officer and thirty men. Lieut. Reilly of the southern company, who had meanwhile been ordered by his company commander, Sullivan, to take ten of his men and "mop up" the southern street as requested by Macneil, found that the houses there had been well cleared by the 23rd. But Macneil's company by the time it reached the eastern exit of the village had sent back some 100 prisoners⁶² besides finding many machine-guns and a couple of trench-mortars.

The morning was exceedingly clear, but the Germans had been temporarily stunned by the blow, and Macneil was able by 5.15 a.m. to reach a line of poplars—an outstanding landmark on the flats 200 yards beyond the village.⁶³ He spread out his men in shell-holes and ditches along the whole front to the river, well beyond the final objective; but the ground here, too, was swamp, and they were in water, in some places above their knees. Reilly was sent back to bring up Sullivan's company to extend the line south of the road to the flank of the 22nd.

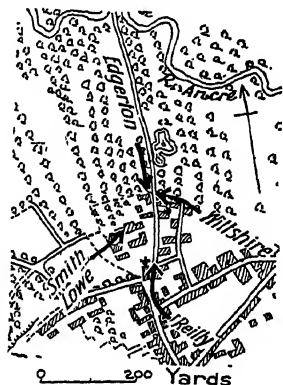


⁶¹ Pte. R. C. Downing, M.M. (No. 706; 21st Bn.). Commercial traveller; of East Melbourne; b. St. Kilda, Vic., 23 Sep. 1889.

⁶² A few of these may have been taken by the 23rd.

⁶³ It is recorded that C. Sgt.-Maj. C. Oliver (Melbourne) was the first to lead his platoon through the village and get it digging in beyond.

Meanwhile the two parties of the 23rd under Lieut. Wiltshire and Sergt. Dixon, making their way back along the northern edge of the village to meet the remaining party, received word that it was held up by Germans who, under the leadership of an officer, were still making a fight of it in a house there. The shots first had come from two or three houses on or bordering the green space north-west of the church, and Corpl. Flinn,⁶⁴ a very popular member of the 23rd Battalion, had been shot dead when leading some men around the wall of a house that stood by itself on this green. By the time Lieut. Lowe arrived, the German fire was coming from a house farther north, enclosed in a low garden wall. As Lowe watched it through a loop-hole in the detached house several bombs fell near him and, being uncertain of the number of Germans opposed to him, he decided to send for two platoons that were held ready in reserve and for a Stokes mortar, while the handful of men under himself took cover farther back and exchanged shots with the Germans. The fight went on for half an hour and then, before the platoons arrived, other help



began to come from several directions. First, Lieut. Wiltshire, returning with the combined party from the far end of the village, heard of the check and, as he came along the road skirting the north of Ville, found ahead of him the garden wall which the Germans were holding. Suddenly, in a gap in it previously torn by a shell, there appeared a German officer, wearing *pince-nez*. He was fully exposed from the waist upwards and, seeing himself caught in the open, put his hands above his head. Wiltshire stepped out into the road and one of his men pointed his rifle at the German. Wiltshire thrust the rifle down, saying, "Don't shoot, he's surrendered." "I don't like the look of the bastard," growled the man. The next instant the German dropped his arms and fired a revolver at

⁶⁴ Cpl. W. J. Flinn (No. 2634; 23rd Bn.). Miner; of Freeburgh, Vic.; b. Freeburgh, 1884. Killed in action, 19 May 1918.

them, and a bomb came over from behind the garden wall. The Victorians escaped unhurt and dived into cover, but men of the 23rd already in the fight said this was the second time that these Germans had fired after surrender. Lieut. Reilly of the 21st, returning with his ten men to lead Sullivan's company out east of the village, came up near by at this juncture, having heard that help was wanted. Wiltshire set his Lewis gunner to chip with the stream of his bullets a hole through the base of the wall. Half a drum sufficed. Immediately the hole was through, several Germans behind the wall got up and were seen racing across the garden.

Meanwhile Lieut. Edgerton of the 24th at his post in the marshes north of Ville had also heard the shooting, and, seeing some of the 23rd emerging from the eastern end of the village, he and a companion, Corpl. Fry,⁶⁵ came forward and entered the nearest house (the one enclosed by the wall) to find it unoccupied. But as they passed through it they saw a dozen Germans leave a neighbouring building and run straight for a side door in a small detached house north of the church. Edgerton and Fry shot three of them as they went. Edgerton now shouted back for one of his Lewis-gun teams, who, on their arrival, trained their gun on the door through which he had seen the Germans enter, while he together with Fry and another lance-corporal (Smith)⁶⁶ and the faithful Blankenberg crept to the door, near which lay the dead body of Flinn. On entering Edgerton heard a noise in the main inner room. A brick had been pushed out of its wall and, looking through, he saw six Germans. He at once fired on them with his revolver, causing a wild scramble over a barricade that barred the way into a third room. He shot five, while the sixth tried to climb inside the chimney. Immediately afterwards a German officer in *pince-nez* came round to the front of the house, started back on seeing Edgerton there, and fell into the arms of Edgerton's companions.

This sudden attack from their rear broke the Germans' resistance. Some of them tried to escape along a wall leading towards the church, but ran into the arms of Reilly. The men of the 23rd had warned Reilly to take no notice of surrender,

⁶⁵ Cpl. R. H. Fry (No. 187; 24th Bn.). Labourer; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 1895.

⁶⁶ L.-Cpl. J. J. Smith (No. 1770; 24th Bn.). Labourer; of Wuk Wuk, Vic.; b. Wuk Wuk, 20 July 1897. Died of wounds, 24 Sep. 1918.

"as these Germans had twice before surrendered and then failed to come in when our men came off their guard." The 23rd shot these prisoners, and, in the house, the German officer was wrenched from Edgerton's men. Wiltshire, waiting outside, saw him come backwards through the door pummelled by the infuriated Smith. "Don't shoot him, he's mine," shouted Wiltshire, and, picking up the panic-stricken man from where he had fallen, showed him Flinn's body, and then shot him. So long as governments and nations settle their differences by methods fit for the brute pack rather than for reasonable beings, such savageries are unavoidable even among decent men and in civilised armies.

This brave but ruthless fight by a single German officer and a handful of men—twenty at most—ended all resistance in the village. The two reserve platoons came up soon afterwards and men roamed through the village in search of souvenirs, food, or adventure, and frequently came upon odd Germans. Two youngsters, never previously in the line, were enjoying themselves with a piano in a cottage lately used by German signallers when a trap-door opened in the floor and a German sergeant-major and ten men came out and, not without embarrassment on both sides, surrendered.

Thus, while Capt. Macneil was placing his posts east of Ville the village had been cleared. But hardly had Macneil's line been established than it became evident that it would be most difficult at present to maintain. The Germans, from their support and reserve positions on the hill north of Morlancourt, almost immediately detected him. This spur had previously been shut out from view by a smoke screen well laid by the artillery in accordance with the operation order, to cover the 22nd Battalion while digging in.⁶⁷ But the smoke had now vanished, and German machine-guns firing from the banks and roads on that spur, between a quarter and half a mile distant from the poplars, began to play hotly on the ground above the posts.

A German account says that at an early hour⁶⁸ a detachment of

⁶⁷ The smoke barrage was provided by two batteries (12th and 15th) of eighteen-pounders and one battery (104th) of 4.5-inch howitzers. It lasted from 3 to 4 a.m., the rate of fire generally being one round per gun per minute (for howitzers one round every two minutes). At the beginning and at intervals during this time a denser burst was fired.

⁶⁸ *History of 52nd R.I.R.*, p. 505. This movement is mentioned in connection with others that occurred at 5 a.m.

machine-gun sharpshooters⁶⁹ was ordered to the hills north and south of Morlancourt. Possibly these were some of the guns which now opened.

Though not closely aimed, this fire forced the Victorians to lie very low and quiet. They were thus hampered in observation, and many rifles and Lewis guns were likely to be clogged in the mud. No one was in touch with them or even closely supporting them on either flank. The spur on which the 22nd lay continued down almost to Macneil's right flank, but this end was not within the 22nd's objective, and Macneil could not see over it—the enemy might at any time attack him suddenly from there. He decided that the risk in trying to hold this line by day under these conditions was too great. Accordingly at 6 o'clock he wrote to Lieut.-Col. Duggan that he was bringing his troops back to reorganise behind the village, his intention being to go forward again at night. Having despatched the messenger, he dribbled his men back by twos and threes to an appointed rendezvous behind the church, where the enemy on the hills could not see them. Returning himself with the last Lewis-gun team, he reached the church at 6.45. All was then quiet on the green and the platoons were able to clean their rifles and Lewis guns and reorganise their sections while Macneil waited for orders.

While the left company of the 21st was being placed beyond the village, the chief preoccupation of Lieut. Sullivan, the wounded commander of the right company, was how to maintain his position in spite of the supporting artillery's barrage, which constantly fell about them. "Can anything be done?" he wrote at 4.20, adding that otherwise he would have to withdraw. Twenty minutes later, Lieut. Bazley,⁷⁰ the intelligence officer of the battalion and a highly trusted leader, arrived and persuaded Sullivan to get his wound dressed, leaving his company in charge of Bennie. Next arrived Reilly, ready to carry out the order from headquarters—that Sullivan's company should establish itself next to Macneil's east of the village. In full sight of the now awakened Germans only 400 yards away across the crop-land, however, this project was so plainly

⁶⁹ These Army troops were now being used to increase the divisional machine-gun strength; the British strength had been increased by the formation of divisional machine-gun companies.

⁷⁰ Lt. R. K. Bazley, M.C.; 21st Bn. School teacher; of Ailsa and Mooroopna, Vic.; b. Leongatha, Vic., 16 June 1894.

suicidal that Bazley assured Bennie that, if it had to be carried out, he would first have a smoke screen laid on the German position. Knowing that Ville was now clear of Germans, Bennie ordered Sergt. Lyon to withdraw his platoon to the Big Caterpillar, clean rifles, and prepare to counter-attack if required, and then walked over to the church, whither Bazley had preceded him, to see Macneil.

It was 7 o'clock when he reached the green. There were Bazley, Macneil, and Garton, and also Lieut. Dearden,⁷¹ whom the battalion commander had sent up to reinforce Macneil and who had left his platoon west of the Crucifix, at Eales's shed.⁷² At this juncture signallers arrived extending the telephone line. Macneil explained the position to the battalion commander, who then told him to draw up with Bazley a scheme of defence and carry it out. Macneil at once took charge of both companies. To keep the Germans out of Ville during the day, a post under Sergt. Donaldson⁷³ was placed on a solitary dry spot discovered by Lieut. Garton on the north-eastern edge of the village. Garton also showed this post to Edgerton who, with Sergt. White, was returning from yet another scouting tour, and who forthwith (at about 9 o'clock) dribbled out his platoon along the southern bank of the Ancre to cover Donaldson's flank. But his men and Kopsen's, lying there in twos and threes behind the tree-trunks, served only as targets for German shells that missed the village. By these Kopsen was wounded and several men were killed. As the flank of the 21st was sufficiently covered by Sergt. Collery's platoon lying north of the Ancre, Col. James withdrew this part of Mahony's company to the railway pit, while, for better communication across the river, Collery's platoon under the direction of two engineers recovered the overturned bridge and placed it where originally intended, exactly in front of Collery's posts.

Meanwhile, about 8 o'clock, Capt. Macneil of the 21st, leaving Donaldson north of Ville, had withdrawn the rest of his company to the south of the village, placing it in the road-cutting on the flank of the 22nd Battalion and ordering Sullivan's company back to shelter in the northern extension of the

⁷¹ Capt. G. R. Dearden; 21st Bn. Farmer; of Lismore, N.S.W.; b. Walcha, N.S.W., 3 Sep. 1895.

⁷² See p. 126.

⁷³ Sgt. A. J. Donaldson (No. 5819; 21st Bn.). Police constable; of Prahran, Vic.; b. Raywood, Vic., 14 Apr. 1888.

Big Caterpillar. At this stage a German aeroplane came over and the Germans began to shell the village so heavily that the last of the withdrawing platoons had to be led round its edge. The raiding party of the 23rd, who, among other tasks, were now helping to send back the German wounded, had to be withdrawn. In addition, German guns somewhere south of the Somme now opened on the extension of the Big Caterpillar in direct enfilade, killing five and wounding eight of Sullivan's company there. Dearden's platoon near the shed, and trench-mortar men and machine-gunners, who with large supplies of ammunition were in the northern end of the Caterpillar, also were threatened with heavy loss by this shelling, but were withdrawn in time.⁷⁴ Just then a youngster from a West Victorian farm, L.-Sergt. Allen⁷⁵—who in the previous year, when convalescent from wounds, had narrowly escaped being kept in England as under age—crept out from Bennie's position through the open crop a quarter of a mile from the enemy's machine-guns, and placed three Lewis gunners amid the green wheat on the south-eastern outskirts of the village. The village was thus safeguarded. Dearden's platoon could be safely withdrawn from the dangerous flats. Macneil's company occupied the sunken Méaulte road on the 22nd's flank. At 8.30 the German aeroplane came over again, but by then the companies had dug themselves into the banks sufficiently to escape if not observation, at least dangerous shelling. At 10 o'clock Lieut. Jeffery's two machine-guns were placed out in the crop beside Allen. Lieut. Edwards⁷⁶ of the 21st came up to say that he and his platoon had been sent up to be used as required; but, with the village guarded by his own company on one side, Donaldson's post on the other, and Allen's Lewis gunners between, Macneil



⁷⁴ Pte. R. L. Brown (Brunswick, Vic.) of the 21st crawled to the Caterpillar during the bombardment and brought away the drums of ammunition for his Lewis gun. Shortly afterwards the dump there was blown up. (Brown died 15 Oct. 1927.)

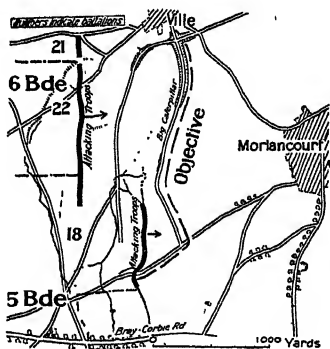
⁷⁵ Sgt. T. J. Allen, D.C.M. (No. 2857; 21st Bn.). Farmer; of Horsham, Vic.; b. Geelong, Vic., 1 May 1899.

⁷⁶ Lt. H. Edwards, M.C., D.C.M., M.M.; 21st Bn. Labourer; of Brunswick, Vic.; b. Terang, Vic., 10 June 1888.

had no present need of further assistance and therefore kept Edwards back at the jumping-off line. He knew that the 6th Brigade would easily seize its full objective that night.

The 5th Brigade's part on the plateau next to the 22nd Battalion had been carried out equally well. Here two companies of the 18th Battalion made the main attack, one starting in touch and level with the southern flank of the 6th Brigade, the other waiting farther forward until the advance picked it up and joining in for the last 250 yards. In front of this company the barrage was stationary until the barrage on the left came up, and then moved on with it ahead of the infantry. At the same time on the right a third company sent out a platoon to form a strong-post where the right flank rested on the diagonal road towards Morlancourt; its three other platoons served as carrying parties. The fourth company, on the right, did not advance except to bend forward its extreme left flank along the diagonal road. The two companies making the main attack went over on a front of 750 yards, their lines, like those of the 6th Brigade, being very thinly strung out, each man ten paces from his neighbour.

Here, too, except on the left where there was some short shooting, the barrage was excellently laid⁷⁷—seventeen minutes after "zero" it was intensified for a minute as a sign to the right companies that it was to move. During the whole attack the scanty lines kept closely behind it. Here, too, the German machine-gunners fought bravely—their fire was strong though sometimes wild and most of them fought their guns till the New South Welshmen were close upon them, some until they were killed by hand-grenades. But the attackers followed the barrage too closely to allow them time to fire effectively.



⁷⁷ It was furnished by two brigades of artillery, the 108th and 189th, R.F.A. A barrage was also placed by the 5th Div.'s artillery for a third of a mile south of the flank of the attack.

This was noted by the Germans also—the history of the German regiment in front of Morlancourt says: “A *corps d’élite*—an Australian division whose lads were as quick as monkeys—advanced quite close behind the creeping barrage of their guns, through which they suffered considerable loss but were established in a trice in the German trenches.”⁷⁸

At the Big Caterpillar a German sergeant-major was surprised, as, revolver in hand, he shouted excitedly into the telephone. Touch was excellently kept—the left lay close to a farm, looking down the gully to Morlancourt, with the flank post of the 6th Brigade ten yards away. By 3.25 divisional headquarters knew that the 18th was in its objective, and shortly afterwards received information obtained from prisoners.

The left of the 18th Battalion was now well past the head of the gully leading to Morlancourt, and had pushed a post 100 yards out on its southern slope. Some Germans were still in the gully; indeed the lines of the 18th had been too thin to sweep up all their opponents even in the earlier advance. One German post was seen shooting up white flares 200 yards behind the front. Some captured Germans, sent back unescorted, are said to have joined their comrades here, and parties of the 19th Battalion, led by Capt. Taylor immediately behind the attacking troops to dig a communication trench, were fired on. Lieuts. Fisher⁷⁹ of the 19th and Engel⁸⁰ of the 5th Field Company led an attack on the post and captured five of the Germans and two machine-guns. Even at day-break, Colonel Murphy, going up to his front line with Scout Sergt. Boyce, came on a party of Germans still holding out, who surrendered to them. Colonel Murphy ordered the withdrawal of the advanced post, considering that it was dangerously exposed.

It is possible that some of the Germans who continued to hold out behind the lines may have escaped. The history of the 52nd R.I.R. says: “A machine-gun of the 2nd Company, already completely surrounded, remains firing until the afternoon and then cuts its way through to the rear, as do the light *minenwerfer* of the III Battalion, which had been given up for lost. In doing this Lieutenant Tietz was killed.” The *minenwerfer* were in the head of the Morlancourt gully, and possibly got clear after Murphy had withdrawn his post.

The troops digging in found that parts of the ground were

⁷⁸ *History of the 52nd R.I.R.*, p. 503.

⁷⁹ Lt. J. Fisher, M.C.; 19th Bn. Carpenter; of Sydney; b. Methil, Fifeshire, Scotland, 12 June 1891.

⁸⁰ Lt. G. H. F. Engel, M.C.; 5th Field Coy., Engrs. Electrical engineer; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Poona, India, 1 Oct. 1896.

chalk rock, difficult to penetrate; the 19th Battalion hit upon such a patch and could make little headway with its communication trench. Even the troops in softer parts were hampered as soon as daylight broke, by the absence of a smoke screen to give them protection like that furnished to the 6th Brigade, and German infantrymen, difficult to detect in the half-grown wheat, opened a severe sniping fire. Officers and men began to be hit all too frequently,⁸¹ and urgent requests had to be sent to the artillery and also for rifle-grenades and additional Lewis guns to keep this fire under. These means were gradually effective. Shortly after day-break about half a company of Germans appeared against the sky-line in front of the advanced right flank post, but they ran back at the first few shots. Farther north the 18th could still see into parts of Morlancourt gully in front of the 6th Brigade. In the early morning a whole company of Germans was observed running back there without arms, and the 18th Battalion afterwards warned the 22nd that Germans were concentrated beneath the banks in the valley. Airmen at 6 o'clock saw many Germans moving up to Morlancourt from farther back, and at 7.30 they were detected moving in the Ancre valley. The artillery came down heavily upon both movements,⁸² and the enemy made no visible attempt to counter-attack the 6th Brigade.

In view of the comparative easiness of the advance, battalion headquarters were surprised at the statement, obtained everywhere from prisoners, that the attack had been expected and carefully prepared for—a statement confirmed by the finding of two German orders.⁸³ According to these, information had been received from spies that the British were preparing to attack the German positions “in front of a bridge” near Albert, and the information had since been confirmed by “aeroplane reports . . . wireless, or power-buzzer.”⁸⁴

The mention of a bridge apparently focused the attention of the German army headquarters on the important bridgehead at Albert. The history of one of the regiments there⁸⁵ states: “The authorities expected

⁸¹ Lt. G. Wilkinson (Hornsby, N.S.W.) was killed by a German sniper at this time. Lt. G. B. Woodriff (Penrith, N.S.W.) was killed trying to silence a machine-gun. Early in the fight Capt. J. N. Doyle (Sydney) was hit by a machine-gun, and Lt. A. G. A. Walters (Newtown, N.S.W.) was killed by a shell. Lt. F. H. Semple (Mosman, N.S.W.) was killed by a shell after the troops had dug in. All the officers of the left company were hit.

⁸² Lt. Hopper's machine-guns constantly fired at long range on the Germans moving into Morlancourt.

⁸³ An order from the 213th Bde. to its regiments, and a message from the III/52nd R.I.R. to its companies.

⁸⁴ This last could only mean that imprudent messages transmitted on the British side had been intercepted by listening apparatus. Gen. Birdwood therefore issued an emphatic order insisting that the precautions against the sending of such messages must be strictly enforced.

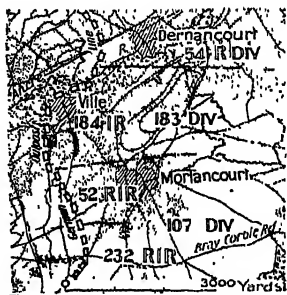
⁸⁵ 248th R.I.R., 54th Res. Div., between Albert and Dernancourt.

a fairly important attack by the Australian divisions to capture Albert." It may be guessed, however, that the mention of the "bridge" was due to some remark dropped in a rearward village by someone—possibly a private or sapper, or possibly in the high ranks of corps or army—who knew (and knew early)⁸⁶ that the special bridges were to be made.

German records available since the war show that warnings of the coming attack were issued as early as the night of May 17, but the agent's message may have been received before. At all events, either for this reason or because of the recent fighting the front at Ville and Morlancourt was strengthened by the putting in on May 16 and 17 of two divisions to relieve the 199th, which had been so battered by the Australian attacks of the previous fortnight. One of these, the 183rd, was not at the time a good division. Crown Prince Rupprecht states⁸⁷ that it contained numbers of men over age and of young recruits some of whom shortly before,⁸⁸ on first finding themselves under artillery fire, unbuckled their equipment, held up their hands, and signalled to the enemy with white flags as sign of surrender. The 183rd Divn. took over the line in front of Ville with its 184th Regiment in the line and parts of the 418th and 440th Reserve in close support. The 107th Divn. relieved the troops in front of Morlancourt, with the 52nd R.I.R. on the right and the 232nd R.I.R. astride of the Bray-Corbic road. "Our predecessors had had sharp fighting," says its historian. "That is why we found the 31st I.R. (18th Division) thrust forward into the line of the 199th Division."

These divisions, coming up shortly after the only pre-existing German lines on the plateau had been lost, had to set to the work of entrenchment again almost from the beginning. The history of the 52nd R.I.R. states that its forward battalion, the III, held with four companies, averaging only 2 officers and 55 men each, a front of 1,650 metres. Such trenches as existed, connecting shell-holes, were from 4 feet to barely 2 feet in depth, protected only in parts by "concertina" wire.⁸⁹ The part where the Australian line topped the gully to Morlancourt was particularly dangerous. "It is an altogether evil position, naked, absolutely shelterless. . . . By day, because of snipers, everything has to lie low; by night, on relief one creeps back on all fours. . . . The enemy shows himself active," especially with artillery bombarding with gas and other shell the back area and Morlancourt.

The warning to be on the alert reached the regiments on the night of the 17th. South of Albert "all means of defence and preparations were deliberately undertaken."⁹⁰ On the actual front of the attack,



⁸⁶ Unless the message was sent by pigeon, it would probably take nearly a week to reach the German staff.

⁸⁷ In his diary of May 11.

⁸⁸ Apparently in the line north of Albert, which the division held during April.

⁸⁹ Rolls of wire, usually without barbs, which could be quickly extended but was easily crossed.

⁹⁰ *History of the 248th R.I.R.*, p. 178.

supports and reserves were brought up closer and forewarned to stand ready. The commander of the front-line troops of the 52nd R.I.R. ordered, "No one is to leave the trenches; no rations will be brought up; an iron ration will be given out." The regimental commander (who had not yet taken over from his colleague of the 237th R.I.R.) visited the line, made sure of contact right and left, gave targets for machine-guns and trench-mortar detachments, and gave brigade his views as to the weakness of the position.

The history of the 184th I.R., which held Ville, tells little of the fight there; probably, indeed, little news came back. The regiment was caught in relief, "in an as yet completely unknown area. The II Battalion is almost completely wiped out." The I Bn., in support, was hurriedly reinforced by the III from Tailles Wood. By evening a front was held by mingled parts of all three battalions, with parts of the III/184th, III/418th, and I/440th Reserve, which had been summoned from Bray in the morning, in close support. In addition, at 7 a.m. III/246th Res. of the 54th Res. Divn. was summoned from its rest billets at Carnoy and hastened to support the left flank of its division (at Dernancourt), which had been exposed by the attack. Doubtless these were the troops seen and fired on by the Australian machine-guns at long range, and by the artillery. Patrols of the III/246th found that, east of Ville, between the flanks of the 54th Res. Divn. and the 184th I.R. there was a gap of 750 yards. Across this the flank regiment of the division (247th R.I.R.) presently stretched a thin line of troops.

Of the front-line battalion facing the 18th Aust. Bn. at Morlancourt only 28 men came back, including not one of the 9th and 12th Companies, and only one of the 11th. First Lieut. Ritter of its support battalion (II) describes how at midnight, as the companies of his battalion lay out, news came through of the capture during the day of two sections of the front-line garrison. At 1.55 "an annihilating fire suddenly descended on our trenches. Soon afterwards yellow flares were sent up and our barrage came down." They next heard the clatter of machine-guns against the "English" attacking the second German line. The order was given to counter-attack. They advanced. The dawn began. They lined out along a sunken road with great intervals between their groups. Then a few fleeing men came from the front. Ritter tried to gather information from them but he could only get, "The Tommies have broken through!" At this juncture, he says, "the enemy comes in masses over the ridge. Now our machine-guns can get hold of him. . . . He goes to ground; but he is too strong and we are too few." (As Ritter contented himself with taking up a line in support his effort was, naturally, not recognised by the 18th Bn. as a counter-attack.) It is stated that many of the German light machine-guns failed, their belts having been soaked by the rain. Two heavy machine-guns coming up, veteran and trustworthy troops, were now placed by Ritter between his widely scattered sections. At 5 a.m. two companies of the I Bn. from reserve filled the gaps, and soon afterwards were put in to hold the line. A machine-gun sharpshooter detachment was rushed on to the hills north and south of Morlancourt. At 9 p.m. two companies of the 418th I.R. (183rd Divn.) were also given to the front-line commander there. During the night the II/440th R.I.R. (183rd Divn.) was inserted in the northern part of its sector. The III/440th was brought up in second line, north-east of Morlancourt, to keep touch between the 27th R.I.R. and the 184th I.R. On May 19 the two remaining battalions

of the 418th I.R. had been brought to second line in Tailles Wood and placed astride of the Bray-Corbie road there.

During the morning the hot sniping fire of the Germans on the plateau and the bombardment of Ville, sometimes with heavy shells, continued. For its part the 6th Brigade had also sent forward nine pairs of snipers, who from allotted positions picked off the enemy, especially during the first two hours after dawn when movement was free. They claim 57 hits;⁹¹ word came a week or two later from Fourth Army Headquarters that German prisoners spoke of the deadliness of the Australian shooting.

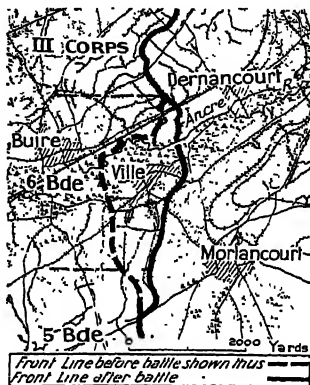
The early afternoon was exceedingly quiet. At 5.45 German artillery fire came down more severely than before upon Ville and the Big Caterpillar. Three-quarters of an hour later, in preparation for the enclosing of the village, Capt. Macneil went through it to visit Sergt. Donaldson on its northern edge. In the village he met two sergeants of the 24th Battalion who told him with some anxiety that the Germans were back in Ville. Going on to Donaldson, Macneil learned from him that at 6 o'clock a patrol of twenty Germans had come along the road from Morlancourt and entered the houses at the eastern end of the village. Donaldson had intentionally allowed them to pass, intending to cut them off and capture them; but on sighting the two sergeants of the 24th the party had hurriedly retreated. Seeing it escaping, Donaldson's post had opened fire, hitting two men.

Two German patrols appear to have entered Ville during the day—one from the 247th R.I.R. (at Dernancourt) in the morning, and later one from the supporting artillery. The latter found that, though Ville had been lost, their opponents were not in the village. Orders were accordingly given by XIII Corps that the 54th Res. Divn. should try to get into the town by encirclement from the north. It was later reported that this could not be done because of strong opposition. The patrol seen by Donaldson was evidently associated with some part of these operations. The XIII German Corps then ordered that the existing line should be held and improved by small attacks. As the 247th R.I.R. had suffered heavy loss, its left was reinforced by a battalion of the 248th.

At nightfall, 10 p.m., the two companies of the 21st Battalion went forward and, for the fourth time in twenty-four

⁹¹ Ptes. C. C. Wilson and E. Konza of the 22nd Bn., working in front of the Big Caterpillar, are said to have been most successful. The snipers were under Lt. E. Thewlis. (Wilson belonged to Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.; Konza to Ponto and Dubbo, N.S.W.; and Thewlis to Euroa, Vic.)

hours, dug in. On the flats patrols, though wading through water, kept touch between the groups digging on drier land.⁹² In the centre two companies of the 28th Battalion, lent by the 7th Brigade, came up and dug an advanced line of posts for the 22nd Battalion, covered by patrols of the 22nd which lay out ahead well supplied with rifle-grenades. Capt. Macneil, while settling the line at the southern flank of the 21st, saw a company of men standing about at ease on the sky-line at the western entrance of the Morlancourt pan, and walked out intending to tell the 28th that it was ahead of its proper line, or, alternatively, to bring his own flank up to it. When he was fifty yards away the two leading sections of the company deployed and came towards him. Realising that they were German he ran back, chased by several shots.



He ordered the 21st to stop digging and stand to arms, while Lieut. Reilly sent out a patrol to find what the enemy was at. The nights were very short and, as much digging had to be done before dawn, Reilly sent out only Sergt. Lyon and two men. The Germans opened on these with a machine-gun, wounding all of them. One of the men managed to get back with the news that the sergeant lay out in front of the enemy, but a second patrol, sent to search, came upon him dragging himself along the ground towards them with his wounded comrade on his back. He said that the Germans, after firing at the patrol, had moved back behind the spur.

By dawn the whole position was dug in and strongly held, with the posts in touch along the front. The wounded had been cleared.⁹³ The 2nd Pioneers had dug a communication trench

⁹² The wounded officers had been replaced by others sent from the nucleus. Lt. E. B. Mason (Pahran, Vic.) took charge of Sullivan's company, and Lt. R. A. Gibson (Melbourne) was sent to help Garton, while Capt. Macneil took charge of the three companies of the 21st now employed.

⁹³ The motor ambulances usually came up to Mericourt, but, as heavy shelling was expected there, a new loading post was prepared on a road up the hillside to the south-west. On May 18 when the new post was being finished, it was bombarded and destroyed. Maj. Bignell (6th F. Amb.), who with Capt. R. L. Park (5th F. Amb.) was in charge, moved the post a little farther towards Mericourt.

from the Little Caterpillar to the new front line, 200 yards beyond the Big Caterpillar. When on the night of May 20th the 21st Battalion was relieved, its posts east of Ville were just preparing to resume peaceful penetration by cutting out (with the help of long-distance rifle-grenades) a German post re-established at the line of poplars reached by the 21st the day before.

The action at Ville and Morlancourt was a complete success. For the first time, notes a writer of the 6th Brigade, the plans for one of its operations had worked out precisely as intended. The casualties had not been high—418 in all⁹⁴—considering that 330 Germans with 45 machine-guns had been captured.

The 52nd R.I.R. alone (according to its history) lost 12 officers and 272 men—losses which seem to have been further increased by a surprise bombardment laid on its area on May 21. Its "completely exhausted troops" were relieved that night by the 27th R.I.R. (54th Divn.). Details of the losses of other regiments are not available, but those of the 184th I.R. must have been at least as great. Making all allowances, the total loss of the Germans was probably 800 or more. They had few trenches for shelter, and casualties were suffered not only by the flanking regiments (247th and 232nd R.I.R.'s), but by the diverse battalions and regiments hurried from the back area to fill gaps and strengthen the line.

The considerable movements of local reserves already mentioned, and others, were made in the belief that the attack might be only the first phase of an offensive by the Australian divisions. And—probably through misunderstanding not unmixed with a desire to save the credit of their troops—German commanders reported that their opponents did seriously attempt to push the advance farther. The history of the 52nd R.I.R. says: "Every further attempt of the English to advance is stopped

But on the night and morning of the attack Mericourt and the road to it were so free from shelling that the wounded were moved into it, and, though for a time they lay there thickly, Bignell and Park, by sending for more motors and horse ambulances, were able to clear them. In the afternoon the shelling of the road through Mericourt began again, and part of the dressing-room was knocked in, but by then nearly all the wounded had been cleared to the main dressing station (Querrieu) and thence to the walking wounded station at Flesselles and the casualty clearing stations at Vignacourt.

⁹⁴ The details were:—

| 6th Brigade | | | 5th Brigade | | |
|----------------|--------|----------|---------------------|--------|----------|
| | Offrs. | O. Ranks | | Offrs. | O. Ranks |
| 21st Bn. . . . | 8 | 71 | 18th Bn. . . . | 6 | 72 |
| 22nd Bn. . . . | 8 | 183 | 19th Bn. . . . | — | 5 |
| 23rd Bn. . . . | — | 15 | | | |
| 24th Bn. . . . | 3 | 28 | | | |
| | | | <i>Divl. Troops</i> | | |
| | | | Pioneers . . . | — | 3 |
| | | | Arty. | — | 5 |
| | | | Engrs. | 1 | 3 |
| | | | A.A.M.C. . . . | — | 7 |

Seven officers were killed or mortally wounded: 18th Bn.—Lts. A. G. A. Walters, F. H. Semple, G. B. Woodriff, and G. Wilkinson; 21st Bn.—Lt. T. W. Eales; 22nd Bn.—Lt. C. M. Bowden; 24th Bn.—Lt. G. E. B. Munro.

by the remnants of the III and II Battalions." The history of the 184th I.R. says: "An English attack on the south bank of the Ancre failed after initial success." That of the 232nd R.I.R. (the regiment on the southern flank) says that, although the right of its right company was bent back, the greater part of its line farther south—which actually was outside the front of the assault, though not of the barrage—repelled the attack. The staff of the Second German Army was thus able to claim that what was really a sharp reverse was a gratifying success. "The assault was bloodily broken up in front of the village," said its news bulletin, and "efforts of the enemy to advance farther in the Ancre valley failed." The German wireless stated: "British attacks on the southern side of the Ancre in front of Morlancourt were heavy failures."

It might be thought that this distortion of fact was also partly intended to sustain morale; but it is characteristic of German regimental historians writing years afterwards even in the pre-Nazi period that, though generally frank in their narratives of 1916-17, many of them cannot face the facts when, in this year's fighting, it comes to defeat. Again and again they set up the myth that hostile attacks, which actually attained every square yard that was aimed at, were intended to go farther but were stopped by the barrier still presented to them. The purpose of this in the histories may in some cases be political—to maintain in the new German army the tradition that its predecessor was undefeated—a motive which would withdraw these narratives from the domain of history into that of nationalist propaganda.

In any case, the myth was not present in the minds of German officers and N.C.O's who fell into Australian hands that day. Many of these made no attempt to hide their disgust at the lack of stubbornness of their troops. It is true that a number of the machine-gunners fought with the bravery that always drew on them the admiration of Australians; and that tribute was also evoked by the fighting at the company headquarters in Ville, flagrant though were the breaches of honourable convention. But, considering the warnings received and the freshness of the troops,⁹⁵ the resistance of the infantry was generally feeble. An Australian's diary says: "One of their own officers met them in the cage,⁹⁶ gave them a dressing down, and finally kicked the bottoms of some of them."

⁹⁵ They were in clean, fresh uniforms, with full packs.

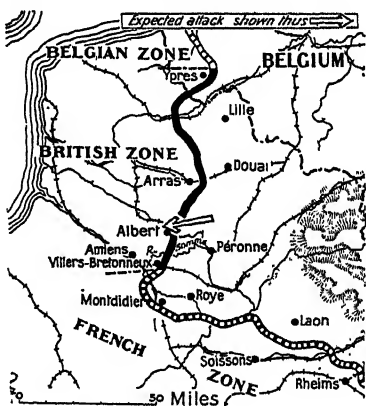
⁹⁶ The prisoners-of-war compound.

CHAPTER V

FOCH HOLDS THE SCALES

ALMOST every prisoner examined after the capture of Ville said that a big attack against Amiens was imminent. An officer said it would be launched on May 21st and some of the prisoners from the 107th and 183rd Divisions said that the Germans would push forward astride of the Somme. But as to this the evidence secured on that front by the Australian troops was all the other way: indeed, so slight were the enemy's preparations between the Somme and the Ancre that no soldier believed a big attack could be impending there, and the intelligence staff concluded that this report had been spread by the German staff among its own troops with the intention of its reaching and misleading the Allies.¹

But evidence of a coming attack farther north was very much stronger. A certain number of the prisoners said they had heard that an army under Field Marshal von Mackensen was concentrating about Cambrai; an airman captured by the French said that a feint was to be made on their front west of Rheims, but that the real objective was still Amiens. Another said that the offensive would be launched in a few days, but he did not know where. Statements by other captured airmen had constantly indicated that an offensive would be directed between Albert and Arras,



Arrow shows expected offensive.

¹ On the other hand many of the prisoners of the 31st I.R. captured five days earlier (May 14) had said that they saw no preparations for any large-scale attack in this area.

possibly with demonstrations at Villers-Bretonneux or Montdidier; and, though it was suspected that these forecasts, too, might be intentionally misleading, the German preparations on those fronts were such that an early attack was possible. It was known that Crown Prince Rupprecht of Bavaria, commanding the group of German armies² facing the British, had a mass of divisions in reserve sufficient for a most powerful blow, and it was here that Foch and Haig still expected the stroke to be delivered as soon as the German commanders could organise it.

Foch had to fight in support of his view; Pétain, the French Commander-in-Chief, though tending to agree with it, was by no means so sure.³ For the first time the French staff had lost track of the German reserves, and it consequently regarded the situation on its own front with deep anxiety. The mighty German offensive just ended had increased by 75 miles the front held by the French, mainly in the great bulge created by the "Michael" offensive. Nearly half the French Army had been sent to the assistance of the British, and early in May north of the Oise (that is, in the zone originally held by the British) there were 47 French divisions, 23 in line and 24 in reserve; whereas on all the 330 miles from Noyon to the Swiss frontier there were only 55—43 in line and 12 in reserve. Pétain pointed this out to Foch and protested against the constant draining of his force to supply troops for the almost daily counter-attacks in Flanders by the D.A.N.,⁴ to which he had to despatch a fresh division every three days. In addition to the D.A.N. Foch had sent the Fifth and Tenth French Armies to the southern part of the British zone, near and north of Amiens, as reserves in case of a German thrust either at Arras or on the Somme.

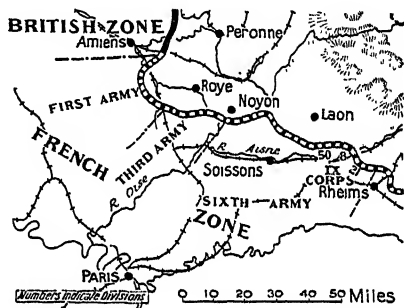
To Pétain's increasingly emphatic requests for the return of some of these reinforcements Foch gave way not an inch. A German offensive on the British front was probable, he said, and the reserves must be kept there; but he did, on May 18th,

² Then the Fourth, Sixth, Seventeenth, and Second. The Eighteenth, Seventh, First, and Third, facing the French Reserve and Northern Groups of Armies, were commanded by the German Crown Prince.

³ The authority chiefly relied on in describing the problems of the French commanders is the *French Official History* (Tome VI, Vol. 2), an admirably lucid work.

⁴ The "Detachment-of-Army of the North"—the title of the French force fighting under the Second British Army.

order General de Mitry, commanding the D.A.N., to cease his counter-offensives; and, after the middle of April, he endeavoured to help Pétain in other ways—first, by seeking the consent of General Pershing, Commander-in-Chief of the Americans, to the insertion of partly trained American divisions together with tired French troops on parts of the quiet French front in Lorraine, and of better trained divisions in the active front; and, second, by pressing Haig to allow exhausted British divisions to be placed in quiet sectors in the French zone, in partial compensation for the French reinforcements continually sent to the British zone. As already mentioned, in spite of a telegraphed warning from Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, who feared that Foch's aim was a "com-



plete intermixture" of the French and British armies, Haig agreed; and though he did not promise the ten or fifteen divisions "to begin with" asked for by Foch on April 30th,⁵ he consented on May 1st to send four divisions immediately and at least two later. By the middle of May the IX British Corps, comprising the 8th, 21st, 25th, and 50th Divisions, was in the line of the Sixth French Army, on a 15-mile front astride of the Aisne in the then tranquil sector between Rheims and the Chemin des Dames. The 19th British Division and headquarters of the VIII Corps were following them to the French zone.

But why was the expected German offensive against the British so long delayed? Three weeks had elapsed since the last vigorous attack on April 25th against the Mont Kemmel position in Flanders. Crown Prince Rupprecht possessed an ample reserve, well rested, and the German High Commanders had overwhelming reason to launch the attack at the earliest moment in order

**Foch's
plans, and
French
masterfulness**

⁵ See *French Official History, Tome VI, Vol. 2, p. 23.*

to anticipate the arrival of the Americans and prevent the recovery of the British.

It was at this stage that Foch, who ever since his appointment as Generalissimo had been itching to take the offensive against the Germans at the first favourable moment, began to develop his already outlined plans. It will be remembered that on April 3rd he had informed Pétain and Haig of his intention to amass reserves for a double offensive—by the British astride of the Somme and by the French at Montdidier.⁶ But no sooner had the plan been made than the German thrust on the Lys, begun on April 9th, used up the British reserves and drew the French ones—the D.A.N. and the Fifth and Tenth French Armies—into the British zone.⁷ Yet the moment the German pressure eased, Foch reverted to his plans for attack. Although he believed that the Germans intended to strike the British again, and swiftly, he wrote on May 3rd urging Haig to dislocate their plan by striking them first. This time he proposed a blow against the new German salient in the north. For this, he suggested, Haig might employ the Canadian Corps, which was practically fresh. The French, he said, were preparing a similar offensive.

Actually ever since the winter Haig had been reserving the Canadians for some such counter-stroke;⁸ indeed—as he now informed Foch—he was in the act of withdrawing them from the line for that ultimate purpose; but as the Germans were clearly preparing an attack on a large scale, the meeting of which might require all his reserves, he did not think the time suitable.

Still the blow did not fall. On May 15th Foch told Haig's representative on his staff, Lieut.-General Du Cane, that he thought "the enemy must be in some 'difficulty.'" At any rate he decided that, if the Germans did not strike soon, he himself would deliver the counter-blow. Visiting Haig on the 16th he explained his view and asked him to study the part to be played by the British Army in a joint scheme of attack.

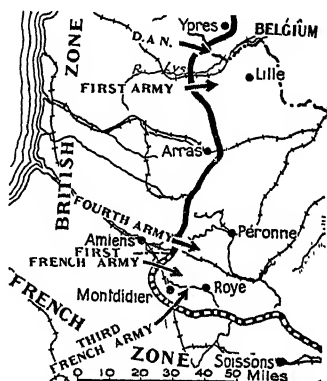
The offensive which Foch now planned, though not in-

⁶ See Vol. V, pp. 276, 296.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 489.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 89, 677, 678.

tended to be decisive of the war, was an extensive one. It comprised two double strokes, one against each of the salients that the Germans had driven into the British front. At each salient a blow would be struck from either flank. On the Lys the British would attack from the south and the D.A.N. at Kemmel in the north. In the Somme-Oise region the French would strike the southern flank of the German salient, and the British and French together the northern side. It was after Foch's visit that Haig ordered Rawlinson to study the question of attacking south of the Somme and Rawlinson, as was related in the previous volume,⁹ came to Australian Corps Headquarters and asked Generals Birdwood and White to send him secretly their appreciation of the task.



Arrows show intended attacks.

Two serious obstacles to the staging of his counter-offensive Foch had to fight down. First, Pétain was convinced that the time was not yet ripe for a counter-stroke, and therefore in his orders to Fayolle (commanding the Reserve Group of Armies next to the British flank) limited the plan of French attack to one for clearing the enemy from Montdidier. Foch immediately overruled this—the attack must be limited only by the power of the Germans to resist it. Second, Haig could not contemplate Foch's full programme of British offensive; in practice he had to regard the Lys and Somme projects as alternatives owing to the reduction of his effective force by nine divisions in consequence of the German blows. Like all other French leaders who learned that the British were envisaging a permanent reduction of their force, Foch was bitterly opposed to it. The French political and military leaders were well aware, from the discussions of the previous winter, that the British Government had not then supported Haig with men to

⁹ See Vol. V, p. 680. Also French Official History, Tome VI, Vol. 2, Appendix 214.

the full extent of its power; and, although the new Military Service Act¹⁰ if strongly administered would probably enable the British Government to comb out its people for service as thoroughly as the French had done, its results would hardly be seen until late in the year.

But French leaders believed or suspected that the British Government was keeping on home service in the United Kingdom much too great a proportion of its army. Inevitably these suspicions were sharpened by the jealousy and tension created by the recent British retirements. As one withdrawal followed another there had grown among French men and women the feeling that the tenacity and endurance of British troops, even in the defensive rôle in which they were famous, could not to-day be relied upon. To the average Frenchman, who did not deeply consider the cause, it seemed that the British had retired almost wherever they were struck, forcing the French, already holding a much longer though quieter line, to hurry continually to their rescue. French villagers, driven from their homes by each new German invasion, growled angry abuse; women spat at the retreating "Tommies." Not all Frenchmen were so ungenerous—here and there were men wise enough to remember that the British had taken the full first weight of each thrust, and continent enough to refrain from impulsive criticism. General Humbert of the Third French Army seems to have maintained his confidence in the British, and General Mordacq claims that he also did so; but the opposite attitude was much more evident, and, indeed, notwithstanding the generosity encouraged in the British by their sports, a similar attitude—based upon equal ignorance—would undoubtedly have been rife among them had the rôles been reversed.¹¹

During the German offensives against the British the relations of the French and British Governments, though outwardly unchanged, were undoubtedly affected by an inevitable tendency in the French leaders to become critical and masterful, with the result that the British became resentful and suspicious.

¹⁰ See *Vol. V*, p. 661.

¹¹ The extracts from Haig's diary published by Duff Cooper contain much similar comment upon the French; even Sir Ian Hamilton, most generous of leaders, does not refrain from repeating criticisms of less broad-minded subordinates in contact with the French in Gallipoli.

A French proposal for pooling supplies between the British, French, and American Armies drew on May 16th from Sir Henry Wilson, an outstanding supporter of the French, a warning to Haig: "The French are shaping to take us over administratively as well as strategically."¹² "The French mean to take us over body and soul . . ." says Wilson's diary of May 12th. "Numberless signs of increasing interference." As another example he cites the fact that Foch and his chief-of-staff (Weygand) thought the British infantry battalions too large and wanted them reduced, as the French had been, and—it may be added—as both British and German soon afterwards were.

But naturally Foch's insistence that the nine British divisions should be reconstituted, and his argument that, of the "1,400,000 men wearing khaki in England," 100,000 could be obtained to fill out nine divisions sufficiently to hold a quiet part of the front,"¹³ caused no resentment in Haig, who was equally eager for both these measures. He had, however, to explain¹⁴ that, although his losses, of some 300,000 men, would be made good by July or August through the return of wounded and the new man-power law, the abolition of the nine divisions was the only means by which, for the present, he could keep the rest of his divisions in use. He had thus been forced to resign himself to this step, but on Foch's representations he now agreed to press his government further. He suggested that some of the skeleton divisions should be completed with drafts from the "B class" men (that is, from those classified by the medical authorities as "temporarily unfit for general service"), but this brought immediate protest from Foch, who was strongly averse from creating the distinction between fighting divisions and trench divisions, which must follow if such a step were adopted.¹⁵ Finally Foch asked the French Prime Minister, Clemenceau, to take up the whole matter with

¹² The proposal for pooling was connected with a suggestion that Haig should be relegated to a kind of Adjutant-Generalship for the Allied Forces. See *Haig*, by Duff Cooper, Vol. II, p. 296.

¹³ *Haig*, Vol. II, p. 297.

¹⁴ Foch wrote on May 11 and also raised the matter when he saw Haig on May 16.

¹⁵ Foch says (*Memoirs*, p. 348) that this distinction was "in considerable favour" with the Germans. Actually, according to Ludendorff, the German command was strongly opposed to it, but could not avoid it.

the British Government. Clemenceau wrote to Lloyd George on May 16th,¹⁶ but four days later Sir Henry Wilson, at a meeting with Foch at Abbeville, told him that the British Government was sending to France during the next three weeks 70,000 more troops than it had originally intended—a reinforcement which, together with the bringing of infantry from Palestine, would certainly enable Haig to reconstitute by the end of June most of the skeleton divisions.

The veiled tension between the two governments had been increased by Foch's learning on April 25th, at the interview with the American Commander-in-Chief, General Pershing, of the arrangement finally concluded on April 21st between Pershing and Lord Milner,¹⁷ by which the infantry of six American divisions was to be transported to the British front provided that the British Government from its own reserve of tonnage furnished the necessary ships. Although this arrangement had been completed by the British at a time of the utmost stress, and they alone undertook the sacrifice of foodstuffs and other supplies necessary in order to provide the ships, yet the French leaders justifiably expected to be consulted in such negotiations, and keenly resented the British Government's action. At a conference with British ministers, immediately called,¹⁸ and a meeting of the Supreme War Council that followed it, Clemenceau protested. Where four nations were in alliance, he said, two of them could not act independently. He and Foch would agree that the Americans arriving in May under this arrangement should go to the British, but (he said, in effect) it must not happen again. The dispute between English and French having thus been settled, in the ensuing meeting of the Supreme War Council both their delegations,

¹⁶ The relations between Clemenceau and Lloyd George were strained. (*See p. 449*).

¹⁷ *See Vol. V, pp. 63-6, 661-2; and British Official History, 1918 (2), p. 445.* In February it had been arranged that six American divisions should be brought over complete, in British ships, and trained (except as to their artillery) with British divisions. On March 27, in the crisis of the first offensive, the Americans agreed to ship the infantry and machine-gunners for the earlier of these divisions before their artillery and transport. In the crisis of the Lys offensive great efforts were made by the British authorities to increase the shipping available, and on April 21 Pershing in London agreed with Milner that the arrangement for shipping infantry units first should apply to all six divisions. Their artillery would follow and would use French guns and be trained by the French. When trained the divisions were to form an American group under Pershing.

¹⁸ On May 1 the British and French representatives conferred immediately before a meeting of the Supreme War Council at Abbeville.

together with the Italian, turned their batteries on General Pershing with a view of breaking down his resistance to continuing during June and July the transport of American infantry in preference to fully equipped divisions. President Wilson had actually promised this; during the April crisis he had been approached independently of General Pershing through the British ambassador at Washington (Lord Reading).¹⁹ Pershing, though not officially informed of the promise, had heard of it. But his determination was to see his troops fighting as an American Army, under his own command, and he foresaw that if infantry were brought over without their artillery, transport, and other services, they would continue to be dispersed as reinforcements for Haig's and Pétain's depleted armies, each new emergency being proffered as a reason for postponing the formation of a distinct American force. Lloyd George, Milner, Foch, Clemenceau, and Orlando one after the other averred that "the war would be lost"²⁰ unless the Americans hurried their infantry across the Atlantic, leaving the more cumbersome units to follow. Pershing retorted that he "would not be coerced," but eventually he capitulated on condition that the present decision should not apply beyond the end of June, arrangements for July being referred to a meeting to be held early in June.²¹ In compensation Foch and Lloyd George agreed "in principle" that Americans in France should be formed into an army with a sector of its own.²²

As a result of the arrangements with Great Britain, at about the time that Mont Kemmel was lost (April 25th) the headquarters, infantry, machine-gunners, engineers, and signallers

¹⁹ He was asked to agree to the transport of infantry in this manner for four months, as the Supreme War Council had previously recommended.

²⁰ See Pershing: *My Experiences in the World War*, pp. 379, 380.

²¹ The programme, as arranged with President Wilson, had been to ship 120,000 infantry, machine-gunners, etc., monthly for four months. The agreement now made in Paris was that the British Government should provide ships for bringing over 130,000 in May and 150,000 in June. The first six divisions were to go to the British "for training and service", those sent in June would be allocated on arrival by Pershing. If during May the ships were able to carry more than the quota agreed upon, Pershing could have them filled with whatever units he chose; but in June any excess carried in British ships would consist of infantry or machine-gunners.

²² At this meeting of the Supreme War Council the Executive War Board set up by the Council in January was abolished—Foch being now in command, there was no need for it.

of the 77th American Division—the first arrivals from the new “National” army²³—began to reach the British back area about St. Omer in Flanders, where the need for reserves was then greatest. On May 9th the 82nd Division began to arrive, and within the next fortnight the 4th, 35th, and 28th, immediately followed by the 33rd and 30th. Each, as it came into its training area, was affiliated to one of the British skeleton divisions, whose staff was charged with assisting in its instruction.²⁴ An Australian diary of May 10th notes that the German offensive, which according to some reports was then due, had not happened that morning.

Every day the German waits more Americans arrive, more reserve we have. It is not organised as yet, but every day it becomes more so.

A fortnight later (May 27th) the same diarist notes:

For the first time I saw some American infantry to-night, coming up towards Bertangles. They were very big men—some tremendous men among them.

Sir Douglas Haig noted that the Americans were “fine big men; reminded me of tall Australians.”²⁵

The first American units to come among the Australians, “C” Company of the 6th Regiment, U.S. Engineers, arrived on May 20th to work in the area of the 4th Australian Division, which was just being withdrawn from the Villers-Bretonneux sector on relief by the 3rd.²⁶

While these troops—closely resembling the Australians in more than appearance, but as yet too crudely trained to count for much more than cannon-fodder in fighting—were pouring through the leafy lanes of the back areas in the British zone, the month of May drew towards its close. The beautiful European summer came rushing on, clothing the fields and

²³ That is, of the divisions specially raised for the Great War. The eight divisions that had already arrived were from the Regular or the National Guard (militia) armies. For the composition of the American Expeditionary Force, see *Vol. V*, pp. 65-6, footnote.

²⁴ Haig directed that the British divisional staffs were not to give orders to American troops—they were to advise and help.

²⁵ *Haig*, by Duff Cooper, *Vol. II*, p. 292.

²⁶ The 4th moved into reserve; the 3rd had received eleven days' rest.

woods with deep, vivid luxuriant green, over which bees hummed drowsily and light winds sent their gentle rustlings together with the drifting shadows of the bright cloudlets. The delay in the German offensive was increasingly perplexing, and the signs were somewhat less convincing than hitherto. As early as May 7th Foch told General Mordacq that it was all very obscure—the Germans might attack at Ypres, Béthune, Albert, or on the Somme. Yet both Foch's staff and Haig's were certain that a large proportion of the German reserves were opposite the British front, and the reasonable expectation was that they would be thrown against it when the German leaders were ready.

But what preparations were impeding them? On May 24th a paper drawn up at British G.H.Q. stated that the Germans had 54 divisions in reserve between the Oise and the North Sea, enough for an attack on a 40-50 mile front. By the end of May their battalions should be filled up to an average strength of 850, with a reserve of 300,000 for wastage. There was therefore no reason why they should shrink from attack. Their objective might be the Channel Ports, Amiens, or Paris. On the British front, facing them, were 48 British and 13 French infantry divisions (40 in line and 21 in reserve). Grouped with the British reserves were already two American regiments, and two more would soon be added. These could at least man rear lines of defence about St. Omer.

Since Foch's appointment at the crisis of the German spring offensive his order to the British Army—and also to the French within the area of that offensive—was that on this part of the Allied front there was "not another inch of ground to be lost"; there must be no thought of abandoning the forward area when the Germans attacked, and making the fight farther back so as to avoid the main German bombardment. On May 5th Foch confirmed these orders by an instruction that between the Oise and the sea the front line must be held; there must be not even a "very limited" retirement—the foothold was already narrow. He had not been able to prevent Haig's withdrawal of General Plumer's Second British Army

from the Passchendaele salient—it had been ordered before he knew of it; but he had laid it down that there must be no more withdrawals without his approval.²⁷ On the old French front from the Oise to the Swiss border, however, conditions were different. There the loss of a few kilometres would, in most sectors, matter little, and in the previous winter, long before Foch's appointment, General Pétain had ordered²⁸ that the main defence line should be, not at the front line, but either at the second or at the "intermediate" one, which must be beyond the range of the German field artillery. The French garrisons would thus gain the advantage of meeting the enemy beyond the area shattered by his bombardment, while the attacking regiments would be disordered by an advance over 2,000 yards of the forward zone against the resistance of the light front-line garrisons, whose orders were to resist to the last even though unsupported.²⁹

Such was the general situation when, on May 24th and 25th, the German shelling upon "touchy" sectors of the British front suddenly increased in severity. Several prisoners had given warning that the date of the offensive was very close. The diary of an Australian at headquarters of the 4th Australian Division states on May 25th that attack had been expected first on the 21st³⁰—

then between May 21 and 25; then May 25. But all is very quiet to-day until 7 o'clock when there suddenly burst out a very heavy bombardment. Gen. Burgess of the 4th Divl. Artillery, who is down at Villers-Bretonneux, rang up from there and said that the Boche was pouring gas shell into the Bois d'Aquenne and Villers-Bretonneux. Col. Lava-rack said: "Well, Michael III³¹ has begun."

The diarist notes, however, that though an attack at Villers-

²⁷ See *Memoirs of Marshal Foch*, p. 341. The object of the withdrawal was to meet the danger created by the German offensive on the Lys. (*See Vol. V, pp. 479, 483.*) When Foch was informed of Haig's decision it was too late to prevent its fulfilment.

²⁸ But see later (pp. 166-7) as to the sequel to this order.

²⁹ See *French Official History, Tome VI, Vol. 2, Appendix No. 41*. If their resistance was successful, however, reserves might be sent to them.

³⁰ It is also recorded that, though the commander of the 14th Bde. warned his battalions on the 20th that the big attack would take place next day, the battalion commanders did not believe it probable. Gen. Birdwood ordered counter-preparation but afterwards cancelled the order.

³¹ By Michael III he and others meant the third big attack on the British front. Actually Michael I, II, and III were all parts of the attack on March 21.

Bretonneux was expected, it was not likely to be part of the big final German effort but rather

the feint which is to go before it. The Germans were gassing Buire, Ribemont, Heilly, and Sailly-le-Sec yesterday; and to-night Villers-Bretonneux far more heavily. Burgess says that the French in the Bois d'Aquenne are getting it badly; the flashes of fifteen German batteries can be seen firing, he says. The French there have asked for counter-battery upon these guns and it is now going on, with a large proportion of gas. A very heavy bombardment; and our 'planes going over hour after hour.

Sunday, May 26. No attack followed the German gassing of Villers-Bretonneux. But Wilkins (the official photographer) who went up there to get photos of gassed men says that there seemed to be a very big proportion of casualties—700, he thinks, in the 11th Bde. . . . Most people expect first a feint at Villers-Bretonneux and Montdidier; then Michael III from Albert to perhaps Bethune. The tongue between the Ancre and Albert should be quiet.

Bombardment at Villers-Bretonneux aroused no real fear of attack—for one thing the Germans were unlikely to shell with mustard gas a place they were about to attack.³² Its results were, nevertheless, astonishingly severe and would possibly have aroused more concern at headquarters had the staffs there been able to visualise the scene in the front line. At 8 p.m. on the 25th mustard-gas shells had begun to drench the reserve trenches and woods at Villers-Bretonneux.³³ The downpour continued, with a break, well into the next morning—it was estimated that 18,000 gas shells were fired into the 3rd Australian Division's area, largely into that of its southern brigade, the 11th; and, as had happened before, on April 17th and 18th,³⁴ the casualties were great, some 600 troops being sufficiently burnt or blistered to be sent at least to the local centres of treatment, although in many parts the drenched ground was evacuated by moving the men forward as soon as the leaders recognised the danger.³⁵ The official photographer, Capt. (now

³² They had done this, however, at Villers-Bretonneux on April 24 (*see Vol. V, pp. 559-60, 584*). Also it was now noted that Hill 104 immediately north of the town had not been gassed, and the possibility of an attack upon it was appreciated.

³³ A wireless message was intercepted saying that this shelling was to take place at 8.10 p.m. on the 25th and 4.6 a.m. on the 26th; but before warning could reach the forward area the shelling had already begun.

³⁴ *See Vol. V, pp. 532-4.*

³⁵ The scene at a field ambulance is shown in *Vol. XII, plate 494.*

Sir Hubert) Wilkins, who, as already mentioned, had gone to the scene,

found the support or reserve trenches with the rifles still standing by the little scooped-out shelter in the trench side, and the waterproof sheet still hanging there. But no man in them—or sometimes a very few sitting down with their heads on their hands, and swollen, streaming eyes, still hanging on. The road was filled with a trickle of men coming down with eyes half-blinded, swaying across the road, just able to open their eyes painfully and dodge between trees when the shells burst. The defences of Villers-Bretonneux had been enormously strengthened by the 4th Divn.; but one does not know what defences can stand this sort of thing: 400-700 casualties in a night, though they may be only casualties for a month, would soon run through the Australian defence.³⁶

On May 25th, although the Australian staff was unaware of this, British General Headquarters was surprised by the discovery in a German mail bag, captured on the Second Army's front, of a post-card from a German engineer sergeant near Laon, who said he had been engaged on heavy and important work of which the result would soon be seen.³⁷ This pointed to preparation for an offensive against the then tranquil French sector on the Chemin des Dames, 30-60 miles east of the Oise, between Soissons and Rheims in Champagne—the very sector to which the four exhausted British divisions had some weeks before been sent on exchange, for a quiet tour in the line. It was known that the commander of the IX Corps, Lieut.-General Hamilton Gordon, did not consider the sector a safe one, and that since May 22nd his troops had observed signs of German movement and other conditions similar to those preceding the earlier German offensives.³⁸ An anxious enquiry was at once sent to General Pétain's G.Q.G. and to General Gordon. The latter necessarily relied on G.Q.G. for general information, and the intelligence staff at G.Q.G. replied that there were no indications that the Germans had made preparations such as would enable them to attack next day.

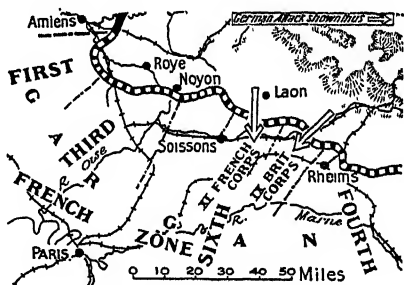
³⁶ The diary continues: "When are we going to get (from British factories) this gas in regular quantities? and for our 18-pounders?"

³⁷ See an article by Lt.-Col. F. S. G. Piggott in the *Army Quarterly*, Vol. IX, No. 2, p. 239.

³⁸ Nevertheless Sir A. Hamilton Gordon says that "so far as an opinion could be formed from their own knowledge and judgment, the IX Corps commander and staff considered that a German attack was not probable." *Sir Douglas Haig's Command 1915-1918*, by Dewar and Boraston, Vol. II, p. 235.

And on the Champagne front May 26th broke as quietly as usual. But that day the French staff was electrified by statements of two prisoners, captured the night before,³⁹ that the Germans would attack in force on the Chemin des Dames on May 27th or, at latest, the 28th. Headquarters of the two corps holding that sector—IX British and XI French—were warned by about four o'clock in the afternoon of 26th. Local reserves were moved up and the British artillery, at least, opened after nightfall in "counter-preparation."⁴⁰ Pétain ordered the armies on either flank to send reserves, but these could not arrive until long after impact of the blow had had its full effect. At 1 a.m. on the 27th, a tremendous German bombardment fell on the whole Soissons-Rheims front, including a crushing onslaught upon the forward lines by trench-mortars; and, two hours and forty minutes later, the Germans attacked.

To British G.H.Q., and indeed to all troops along the British front, the startling news that soon arrived from French G.Q.G. made it clear that the spasmodic German activity on the British front was a demonstration to distract attention from the great attack in Champagne. There the enemy's progress was astonishing. Attacking the IX British and XI French Corps north and astride of the Aisne near Rheims, they had by midday reached the Aisne—five miles behind the Allied line—on the whole central sector of the attack, and had seized the intact bridges.⁴¹ Reinforcements sent to defend or destroy the bridges met Germans already across



³⁹ For an account of this exciting incident, see *The World Crisis*, by Winston Churchill, Vol. VI, pp. 451-2.

⁴⁰ See *The Eighth Division in War, 1914-1918*, p. 222; also Dewar and Boraston, *Sir Douglas Haig's Command*, Vol. II, p. 238. The French official history, on the other hand, says that no counter-preparation was laid down.

⁴¹ Nearer to Rheims, where the British had been given discretion to destroy the bridges, they did this in time (Dewar and Boraston, Vol. II, p. 240).

them, and were driven back. During the afternoon the second line, between the Aisne and Vesle Rivers, was lost by both corps; and before nightfall the Germans were across the Vesle also, beginning to outflank the French position at Rheims, and had seized one of the railways leading to that city. The German divisions in the centre had by then penetrated twelve miles. The tired British divisions on the right half of the front had been rolled back towards Rheims, but the enemy's progress was faster in the centre, against the French; and, when the *communiqués* gradually revealed the extent of the advance, the shock, as General Mangin states, "resounded in France like a thunderbolt. . . . It was the first time since August 1914 that French troops had given ground."⁴² Clemenceau refers to the event as "this lamentable rout, upon which some day we shall have to make up our minds to shed the light of day."⁴³ General Pétain on May 31st in an order of the day expressed his astonishment at the ease with which French troops fell back before enemy forces which, according to all reports received, were not considerably stronger.⁴⁴ Veiled criticisms and open reproaches of the British troops by the French, so frequent of late, stopped almost instantly⁴⁵—every effort was concentrated on stopping this dangerous thrust progressing so close to Paris,⁴⁶ and—second to that—on finding and remedying the cause.

Unlike previous offensives on the Western Front, this surprise advance against the French maintained its speed, and by the third evening the German centre was approaching the Marne, 32 miles from its starting line and less than 50 from Paris. Pétain and Clemenceau, and with them the French nation, were convinced that the Germans were now seeking a decision—that, having drawn away reserves from the French sector by attacking the British, they were now endeavouring finally to overpower the French. Pétain's complaints against the retention of large French reserves in the British zone were consequently re-

**Foch
stands out**

⁴² Mangin: *Comment Finit la Guerre*, p. 186.

⁴³ *Grandeur and Misery of Victory*, p. 55.

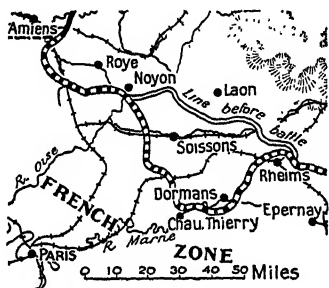
⁴⁴ *Schlachten des Weltkrieges*, Vol. XXXIII, p. 7.

⁴⁵ See also Winston Churchill, *The World Crisis*, Vol. VI, p. 454.

⁴⁶ It was on June 4 when defending the army leaders in parliament that Clemenceau proclaimed his famous resolution: "I will fight in front of Paris, I will fight in Paris, I will fight behind Paris."

doubled, and he urged Clemenceau to have this policy reversed and the troops sent back to him.

The question of the moment obviously was: is this stroke in Champagne the decisive blow or merely a powerful feint designed to draw French reserves away from the British front before continuing there the most powerful blow of all? It was not only at the headquarters of the three great Allied chiefs that this problem was anxiously discussed, though only they could take action to meet it. The Australian diary already quoted, in recording the first news of the Champagne offensive, says:



May 27th. . . . Several have asked to-night, "Is this, do you think, the real German attack?" The idea is that it is the feint before Michael III.

May 29th. Is this Michael III? Most people say not—Blamey (understudying General White on the Corps staff) to-day said he was positive it was not.⁴⁷

The leader on whom fell the immense responsibility of determining the Allies' reaction to this new danger was, of course, he who ordered the movement of their reserves—that is, General Foch. And, for the second time since his appointment, Foch, in an acute crisis, set his face against the convinced and determined appeals of a national commander-in-chief. He knew that the Germans were, for whatever reason, maintaining in Flanders a reserve sufficient to strike a most powerful blow against the British; he did not believe that the present attack, with half the available force, was intended to take Paris; and he could not see how the German leaders could win the war by thrusting farther the salient of their line that already extended towards Paris—such pockets merely afforded excellent chances for counter-attack. When Clemenceau and

⁴⁷ The same diary says that Gen. White, the Australian chief-of-staff, himself doubted whether the German commanders had planned "any rigid set piece." They probably meant to attack the English, he said, but would exploit success wherever they could get through. The diary of Crown Prince Rupprecht shows that this estimate was remarkably close to Ludendorff's actual intention and practice.

General Mordacq visited him on May 28th, Foch told them that he did not believe this German effort was

an attack on a large scale, as it is quite certain that it could not have important strategical results for the Germans. So he does not think he ought to move his strategical reserves, which at the moment are in Flanders and in the Amiens district.⁴⁸

Support, of course, Pétain must have—the German advance must be stopped; the only question was—how much weight would the Germans place behind it? Foch was convinced that they would hold back strength for a main attack elsewhere, and therefore parcelled out his reserves with a cautious hand. The Fifth French Army, one of the two maintained against the expected thrust on the British front, was sent at once from near Amiens, and Foch asked Haig to build up a general reserve of British divisions behind the British front. On May 29th Pétain asked for the other French army, the Tenth, as well as for the Army-Detachment of the North which, under General de Mitry, had for over a month been holding part of the British Second Army's front at Kemmel. Foch, however, estimated that the Germans still had thirty divisions in reserve ready to attack the British, and decided not to send even the Tenth Army until arrangements had been made with the Belgians to take over part of the British left, and thus allow Haig to build up his own reserves. Not until May 30th, when six divisions, till then believed to be in Crown Prince Rupprecht's reserve, had been identified in the area of the offensive,⁴⁹ did Foch give permission for the Tenth Army to go south. That day the Germans extended their gains, reaching the Marne for thirty miles of its course, from Château-Thierry to Dormans, far to the left rear of the French at Rheims.

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| Causes and results | <p>Two clear reasons for this sweeping penetration of the French defences were not far to seek. The first was, of course, surprise—without the knowledge of their opponents, the Germans had managed to assemble twenty-five divisions in first line and five in second on a front of 35 miles, previ-</p> |
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⁴⁸ *Grandeur and Misery of Victory*, p. 46.

⁴⁹ Actually, according to German records, two had then been withdrawn from Rupprecht—by June 3rd, five.

ously held by a third of the number. The secret had been perfectly kept until the day before.⁵⁰ Ludendorff had succeeded in deceiving the staffs of Pétain, Haig, and Foch far more completely than even on March 21st; never in so great an operation on the Western Front had a surprise been so completely achieved.

The result was that, when the Germans broke through, it was into an area in which there were, for some days, insufficient reserves to stop their progress. But surprise was not the main reason for the initial breach. The commander of the Sixth French Army, which held this front, General Duchêne, was a leader of keen fighting spirit but stubbornly conservative tendencies, and he strongly objected to Pétain's policy of not clinging, tooth and nail, to the front line. Military orders, like civil laws, may often be evaded by stretching their interpretation, and Pétain's instructions were resisted by more than one commander to whom the notion of voluntarily abandoning territory to a German attack was intolerable. Duchêne's disobedience was brought to the notice of Franchet d'Espèrey (commanding the army group)⁵¹ and of Pétain by an order which he issued on April 9th to the effect that, if the Germans attacked, they must be prevented from crossing the Oise and the Ailette—in other words, his army must hold its front line

⁵⁰ The statement in Haig's despatches that "the British General Staff had always held the opinion that, before the resumption of the enemy's main offensive" there would be a diverting attack "on the southern flank of the allied armies," and that "this view was proved correct" seems an unfortunate lapse on the part of one whose published reports are otherwise uniformly generous to his ally. It is true that this contingency had occasionally appeared to the British staff almost as likely as it did to the French, and that both staffs had received certain warnings which they had to weigh against an abundance of other information. But in the only practical means of testing the probability—the locating of the German reserves—the British intelligence staff was deceived as completely as its colleagues. A map published by it on May 24th shows that, of 28 German divisions which, by May 31st, were known to be engaged in the battle, 18 were believed to be still in the Oise-Somme region (which, however, was no great distance from the Aisne) or in Flanders. The map of May 28 shows 7 taken from Eighteenth Army, one from Second Army, and one from Fourth Army. That of the 31st shows another 7 taken from the Eighteenth Army, one from Second Army, and one from Fourth Army. Crown Prince Rupprecht's reserve was still believed to hold over 40 divisions.

Some local French commanders anticipated attack. General de Maud'huy told M. Tardieu on May 26: "I am going to be attacked here. I never cease warning G.Q.G., which won't believe it." But such warnings were sent in from many other parts of the front, and, though the French staff knew of signs of attack here and elsewhere, they were not sufficiently numerous or clear to make an offensive seem probable.

⁵¹ The Northern Group (G.A.N.), comprising the Sixth French Army west of Rheims and the Fourth east of it.

at all costs. Pétain and Franchet d'Espèrey at once drew Duchêne's attention to this departure from the principle laid down, but he fought them, pointing out the importance of the ground held by his troops, covering Paris, the strength of the front-line positions, and the moral disadvantage of giving up territory won at such cost in Nivelles's offensive in 1917. It has been stated⁵² that the attitude of Clemenceau—himself a fighter of fighters—encouraged such disobedience. At all events Duchêne had his way against the will of his two superiors. Time was urgent, and Pétain, whose methods of defence had not yet been justified by visible results, eventually gave way and allowed Duchêne to follow his own theory. On May 19th Duchêne ordered his troops to resist in the front line on the Chemin des Dames. According to the commander of the British IX Corps, which came into the line when this policy was already settled,

all of the divisional, corps, and even Sixth Army headquarters were established at an average distance of from five to six miles from the main line of resistance. Similarly many of the electrical communication centres, ammunition depots, supply railheads and casualty clearing stations were just as near to the front, and their vital functional activities could be . . . completely paralysed by a heavy bombardment.

Lieut.-General Gordon noted the inconsistency between the general principle laid down in Duchêne's orders, that troops should be distributed in depth, and "the earlier part of the orders, which crowded the infantry into the forward positions." The second line farther back was, it is true, to be held by the reserve divisions of the Sixth Army. But as soon as the front line was attacked these troops were to move forward ready to reinforce or counter-attack in the front line area, leaving only skeleton garrisons in the second line.

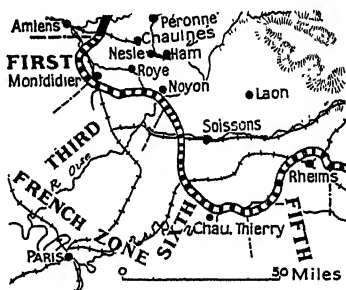
Nearly all Western offensives since those of 1915 had proved that by massing artillery the attacking side could break through front-line defences however strong, and the Germans had now done this once again. The break having been made, the effect of the surprise became evident: the country into which they broke through was almost free of the Allies'

⁵² *La Crise du Commandement Unique*, by General ***, pp. 102-8.

reserves, and it was three days before the French could assemble sufficient to dam the flood. By the fifth day, when the Germans at one point (Jaulgonne) crossed the Marne by boats and established a solitary bridgehead on the southern bank, there began to arrive, along with the French reserves, two American divisions that had been in France for some months:⁵³ the 3rd came up to face the Germans at the Marne River, the 2nd to help holding them on the west, near the Ourcq. By June 1st these assisted in stopping the already slackening advance; on the 3rd the French cleared the Germans from their bridgehead south of the Ourcq. It was already evident that only a new thrust to the east or west of the existing battlefield could set the offensive in motion again.

The question—where would the next attack be made—was already asked and answered. By May 30th both Foch and Pétain knew. With nearly six weeks for preparation the Germans had managed to hide their concentration for May 27th, but they had no time for adequate concealment of the supporting stroke that was now preparing. Signs accumulated of a coming attack in the Noyon-Montdidier area, north of the Oise, between the western flank of the Aisne offensive and the Somme battlefield: many lights of bivouacs around Nesle, numbers of trains at Péronne, Chaulnes, Montdidier, Roye; lights at the railway stations at Ham and Nesle; increase of the artillery, of long-distance bombardment, and of dumps. This and other evidence foreshadowed a most critical situation for General Pétain. With his resources already strained to the utmost in barring the offensive of May 27th, he believed that the Germans still had

**Foch
remains firm**



*French armies, Oise-Aisne front,
1 June, 1918*

⁵³ The 2nd had reached France at the end of 1917 and was about to relieve the 1st on the Somme front. The 3rd had only arrived in March and was still training.

49 divisions in reserve—more than half of them being fresh; his own reserves were almost at an end. Barred by Foch from securing the reserves he wanted from the British zone, he had been calling on General Fayolle's group in the Somme-Oise area, the very front now threatened. For reserves there he must rely upon help from the British and on six divisions from the east of France to be relieved by three newly trained American divisions now being hurried thither.⁵⁴ If the Germans—as he apprehended—were now fighting a decisive battle and meant to throw in their whole strength, his position, without more reserves, was desperate. He accordingly asked not only for all French troops serving in the British zone, but for the American divisions training there, and he took Duchêne and Clemenceau to Foch's headquarters on May 31st to impress the need. Foch would not yet agree. "I insist," wrote Pétain next day. He and Clemenceau both thought Foch was endangering France through being "hypnotised as to the north."⁵⁵

All really depended upon Ludendorff's intention. If, as Pétain feared, the German commanders did mean to throw all their strength into the present operations, then the thinning of Haig's line in Flanders almost to breaking point in order to furnish reserves was not too much to ask. But Foch—though he had his black moments—and, indeed, on May 30th was found by Pershing for once, in the depth of depression⁵⁶—still refused to believe that the offensive against the French was meant to be decisive. Writing to Haig on May 28th to warn him of the probable departure of the French reserves, he had said that it was still possible that the Germans would attack the British front, though not on the scale expected before May 27th; and he had not changed that view. Consequently he still maintained the French Army-Division in Flanders, but he warned Haig that he must prepare plans enabling all British reserves to reinforce any part of their own front.

It was in the height of this crisis that the Supreme War

⁵⁴ Each American division was about twice as strong in infantry as a French one.

⁵⁵ Poincaré: *Au Service de la France*, Vol. X, p. 198.

⁵⁶ Pershing: *My Experiences in the World War*, p. 411. Haig, too, noted on May 3 that Foch looked "more anxious than I have ever seen him."—See Haig, by Duff Cooper, Vol. II, p. 304.

Council held its meeting to consider whether the agreement with the United States Government for the **Conferences** urgent preferential transport of American infantry and machine-gunners should be continued through July. From England to take part there came on May 31st Lloyd George, Milner, Balfour, Sir Henry Wilson, Sir Eric Geddes, and Admiral Wemyss, and prior to attacking the problem of American transport Clemenceau brought before them the question of British man-power. Clemenceau believed that the British Government "still had enormous reserves" of mobilised men in England, and he was not going to let the fear of giving offence prevent him from ensuring, if possible, that England made sacrifices similar to those of France.⁵⁷ In his letter of May 16th to Lloyd George he had pointed out that, although the British Government had brought back two divisions from Italy and two from Palestine, its army on the Western Front had been decreased from 57 to 52 divisions by the elimination of nine divisions. This would mean throwing the burden on the French Army, which, in its turn, would have to disband divisions. The right course was to reconstitute the reduced divisions, but the present rate of reinforcement—only 34,000 men a month—was totally insufficient for this. The British Government, therefore, should make "a resolute call" on its "already mobilised resources."

As before, the proceedings inside the council chamber were not without their resemblance to those of the great contest outside. Clemenceau's opening attack was supported by Foch who, in handling figures supposed to represent the British effort, went much too far. This gave to Lloyd George, smarting under French interference, an opportunity for the effective

⁵⁷ It should be noted that Clemenceau himself, though pressed by Pétain for French reinforcements as insistently as Lloyd George by Haig and Robertson, would not give the numbers asked for. Early in the year Pétain had demanded 200,000 of the 1,200,000 men retained for industrial service—this was the only means, he said, of keeping the army up to strength until the 1919 class came into the field. The War Office replied that this was impossible; between April and June 15 it could send only 40,000 men. It would, however, train up the 1919 class so as to send their infantry and engineers on July 1st to the forward area for training. With 59,000 native colonials and 15,000 Poles and Czechs this should suffice. Pétain would not agree—he still asked for the 200,000; for example, he contended, displaced miners from Béthune should be sent. The War Office refused. Pétain's headquarters then estimated that between April and October his army would be short of 154,000 men. He would not, at this stage, reduce divisions, but tried other economies of troops.

counter-attack, of which he was a master.⁵⁸ Foch had to withdraw his paper, but Lloyd George appears to have reassured Clemenceau that adequate reinforcements would be provided, and he invited the French Government to send an officer to England to investigate British man-power and the way in which it was being used, and to "see if he could find any men."⁵⁹ These pledges meant at least the early re-establishment of most of the reduced British divisions.

Doubtless the critical nature of the events in the midst of which the conference met favoured vigorous decisions and added much force to the French and British arguments for continuation during July of the preferential transport of American infantry, already arranged for June.⁶⁰ Pershing noted that the tone of the meetings was depressed. "When we assembled in the conference chamber at Versailles," says Lloyd George, "we could hear all day during our discussions the deep thud of the German guns at Château-Thierry." The "general despondency," he adds, "came upon me with surprise . . . I did not share it." Foch also, he noted, "definitely did not share the prevailing pessimism." Clearly by June 1st—when the Aisne offensive was obviously checked and he knew where the Germans would strike next—the old soldier had left his bad moment behind him. "He was calmly preparing for his

⁵⁸ Foch spoke of the Germans having 204 divisions against 150 of the Allies. If the British divisions could not be maintained, disaster must come. Milner showed that Foch's figures were wrong; the Allies then had 169 divisions (101 French, 2 Italian, 4 American, 11 Belgian, and 51 British) not counting the skeleton British divisions. When Haig reminded him that the War Office had stated that it would be unable to maintain more than 28 divisions, Milner replied that the forecast was unduly pessimistic. Measures had been taken to increase the British effectiveness through the application of a law of extreme severity, but it would not bring results until August. Lloyd George questioned Foch's figures. Where did Germany get the men from? Foch replied that she managed better: with 68 million people she kept 204 divisions in the West, whereas with 46 million Great Britain kept only 43 (without oversea divisions). Lloyd George retorted that the probable reason was that the Allied loss was greater than the German. (See Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, pp. 421-2.)

⁵⁹ Callwell: *Sir Henry Wilson, Vol. II*, p. 103. Clemenceau told Poincaré this day that he had obtained from Lloyd George the metropolitan resources of England. Poincaré thought the sending of an officer would cause offence.

⁶⁰ Some of the French and British statesmen—and, later, some of the dominion leaders—probably without any deep consideration of the ultimate effect on dominion problems, were anxious to secure Japanese military help in Siberia. The American leaders were opposed to this, and the conference eventually dropped the suggestion, fears being expressed that the bringing in of Japanese would drive Russia into the hands of Germany. On June 19 the Imperial War Cabinet sent a message to President Wilson urging him to support the proposal. Eventually both Americans and Japanese sent forces to Vladivostok, on some general understanding that each nation should send 7,000. The Japanese force, however, was much larger than the American, and some friction occurred. (See *The Intimate Papers of Colonel House, Vol. III*, p. 428.)

great counter-stroke," says Lloyd George. Without much difficulty on June 2nd Pershing was prevailed on to renew the agreement: it was assumed that 250,000 men would be transported monthly, and of these in June priority was to be given to 170,000 infantry, machine-gunners and engineers, and in July to 140,000, Great Britain and America finding the ships.⁶¹

Though Crown Prince Rupprecht on June 6th believed that the French had detected nothing, actually the signs of coming attack in Picardy were now very clear; behind the German lines unusual movement was noticeable as far north as Péronne and the Somme. Pétain's justifiable anxiety increased;⁶² despairing of securing sufficient reserves by other means, he put forward a suggestion from the commander of his Eastern Group of Armies, General de Castelnau, for a withdrawal from Verdun—much as Haig and Plumer in the crisis of the Lys battle had considered a withdrawal from Ypres. Foch would have none of it; but he acceded to Pétain's requests to the extent of asking Haig to allow five of his American divisions to be transferred to quiet zones in eastern France, where they would release trained French divisions for Pétain's reserve. Haig strongly objected—the Americans, he urged, were still only half-trained. His private view was that these fresh American troops were more valuable than the French whom they would release and would be wasted by such use. However, on June 2nd Foch obtained the consent of Pershing, whose decision was final. Foch also ordered south two French divisions from Flanders and, shortly afterwards, two more—leaving there for the moment six. Two of the divisions were removed without any warning to Haig. In addition, having discussed with Haig on May 31st the question of sending another British corps to help the French, Foch now asked him to safeguard the junction of the British and French Armies by placing this corps astride of the Somme at Amiens. Including

⁶¹ The June quota would be 6 divisions (without artillery or ammunition- and supply-trains) 126,000, and reinforcements 44,000. If more could be brought, Pershing would choose the units. In July the quota would be the "infantry" of 4 divisions—84,000—and reinforcements 56,000. Any excess would be infantry chosen by Pershing. Some of the July troops must include men who had not finished the part of training usually carried out in America; but the French and British pointed out that they were now using men who would not previously have been considered fit, and this disadvantage was, therefore, accepted. (*See Pershing*, p. 423.)

⁶² He estimated on June 6 that he could be attacked by 44 divisions.

its three divisions, Fayolle would have 13 divisions in reserve behind the threatened line.

Naturally Haig's eye was all the time upon the mass of divisions (now estimated by him at 49) in reserve behind Prince Rupprecht's line, apparently ready to attack him. Foch had withdrawn from him 8 French and 5 American divisions, and Haig felt that further reduction would definitely be dangerous. Preparations of the Germans on his front were so far advanced that it was estimated they could attack within forty-eight hours, and, although an offensive was obviously imminent against the French north of the Oise, he and his chief-of-staff also expected one north of Arras and another near Hazebrouck. Accordingly, although he gave the order for the British XXII Corps⁶³—under Lieut.-General Godley—to move at once as Foch required, at the same time he wrote to Foch a frank protest against any troops being taken from his zone while Crown Prince Rupprecht's present reserve was still intact. He sent a copy of this telegram to Lord Milner at the British War Office. Under the agreement making Foch generalissimo⁶⁴ each of the national commanders had the right to appeal to his own government if he thought his forces endangered by any order from Foch, and Milner assumed that Haig was now exercising this right.⁶⁵ An immediate conference with the French Government was accordingly arranged. Meanwhile Foch had written to Haig that, for the moment, he could not tell whether the coming German attack might not (as Pétain feared) be extended as far as the recent battle-front on the Marne—becoming a vast operation on an 80-kilometre front. The issue of the war would then be at stake, and *all* reserves would be needed. He therefore asked Haig to thin out the garrisons of his quiet sectors so as to increase his reserves, and to study plans for moving all reserve divisions to the French front. Haig agreed to study the transport of two army corps additional to the XXII, and next day (June

⁶³ This corps had, until the beginning of 1918, been known as II Anzac. The only Australian troops now remaining with it were two squadrons of the old 4th Light Horse Regiment which, at General Godley's request, were left as part of the XXII Corps Mounted Regiment.

⁶⁴ The "Beauvais" agreement of April 3—see *Vol. V*, note on p. 272.

⁶⁵ Actually he merely intended to warn Foch and Milner that he might have to exercise it.

6th) sent a map showing his arrangements for the despatch of the XXII Corps south of the Somme and the assembly of the XIX Corps behind it. The Canadian Corps, then between Béthune and St. Pol would eventually be available as a reinforcement. But the despatch of these nine divisions would leave the British and Belgians with only 67 divisions to face 107 German ones. Haig therefore refused to allow any divisions except those of the XXII Corps actually to start for the French front until it was certain that the greater part of Crown Prince Rupprecht's reserves had been sent thither.

Immediately after this, on June 7th, the conference was held in Paris, Milner and Clemenceau representing the two governments. Foch pointed out that he had only asked Haig to prepare to move British divisions into the French zone—not yet to move them. Haig said that he had studied the proposed move, as requested, but that it would be dangerous, as Crown Prince Rupprecht still had 49 divisions in reserve; he must be informed before any more troops were moved. Foch replied that, if the Germans attacked on a 80-kilometre front, this would mean that they were using their whole strength.⁶⁶ He must be “the sole judge of the necessity of the transport of reserves.” Milner and Clemenceau agreed; in answer to Haig, Milner ruled that Haig must obey Foch's orders at once though he could inform the British War Cabinet if he had any objection.⁶⁷ Clemenceau laid it down that Haig must be informed before any troops north of the Somme were moved by Foch. Foch also told Lord Milner, as he had already told Haig, that he would withdraw only five of the ten American divisions that were to train behind the British front; the remaining five would be left with the British.⁶⁸ He further warned Pétain

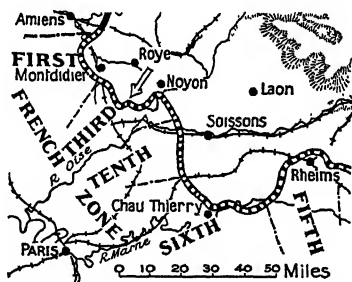
⁶⁶ Haig assented, but asked why Foch thought such an attack likely. All information, he said, pointed to powerful offensives near Arras and Hazebrouck.

⁶⁷ See Callwell's *Sir Henry Wilson, Vol. II, p. 106*; and *French Official History, Tome VI, Vol. 2, p. 267*. Haig's powers were, however, eventually left as defined at Beauvais. See p. 448.

⁶⁸ Foch told Pershing also of this decision. Haig had asked for the return of the IX Corps, whose five divisions (now including the 19th) were reported to have lost 24,500 men in six days, having had to fight without external support or relief; all were now unfit for action. Foch and Pétain agreed to send back all the divisions of the IX Corps and headquarters of the VIII Corps, Haig sending three reconstituted divisions in exchange. Foch asked for two more divisions of the D.A.N., intending to leave only an army corps of four French divisions in Flanders. Foch desired that the IX Corps headquarters under General Gordon should be left, a pleasing sign of confidence since the commanders of two neighbouring French Corps had been superseded.

that the Germans might attack the British front, and that the movement of French reserves to the British zone must be prepared for.

On the day of this conference, June 7th, Foch issued directions for the preparation of the double counter-offensive which, ever since his appointment, he had been planning to undertake,⁶⁹ but which he could not hope to deliver before the German offensive, now imminent, had made some further inroad on his reserves. His scheme now was for the French Fifth Army, lately put in south-west of Rheims, to attack on about July 15th the eastern flank of the new German salient, while the British also attacked in the north—the object being to hamper the German high command in carrying out its coming offensive.⁷⁰ The order had hardly issued when, on June 9th, the new German offensive was launched, precisely where expected, between Mesnil St. Georges, near Montdidier, and the Oise—a front of 22 miles. On June 3rd and 4th Pétain and Fayolle, mistrusting Foch's policy of "not losing an inch" between the Oise and the North Sea, had insisted on the commander of the Third French Army (Humbert) reversing his scheme of defence.⁷¹ He was now to fight in the redoubt line, 3,000-4,000 yards behind the front. The policy was, to withdraw the infantry out of range of trench-mortar bombardment. But the order relating to these details was issued only on June 5th, and again the conservatism of some commanders combined with the lack of time prevented its general fulfilment. The artillery had been duly pulled back,



German attack on Third French Army.

⁶⁹ See p. 151.

⁷⁰ Foch spoke of this project to Haig on June 6.

⁷¹ The order was not to apply to those sectors, on the new battlefields, where organised fronts had not yet been re-established.

but only half the infantry was beyond the presumed range of the annihilating bombardment,⁷² and in the centre, where the Germans used fresh and vigorous forces,⁷³ they made considerable progress in spite of the heavy precautionary fire of the French artillery. Here the second French line was quickly lost. General Pétain's own reserve—apart from divisions exhausted in the recent fighting—had by June 11th sunk to one division; in addition, the G.A.N. had one and the G.A.R. three.⁷⁴ On the other hand the British had fifteen. On June 9th Pétain had written to Foch, asking for the XXII British Corps, and he now warned him that the whole British reserve might be required on the French front. Foch, however, had immediately recognised (as did Pétain soon after) that the present attack, though extensive and powerful, was no decisive blow. Although its front was 21 miles only six of the divisions thrown in were fresh; so far as could be judged from the prisoners the German reserve in Flanders had not been materially diminished; the offensive could, therefore, only be subsidiary to some more important aim—presumably its object was to cause a further withdrawal of the Allies' reserves from the north. Of the 28 German reserve divisions whose position was then known, 21 were opposite the British front and they might attack at any time. Foch therefore, after temporarily placing one division of the XXII British Corps behind the French left, recalled it and even ordered Pétain to send artillery to the D.A.N. in Flanders. He also directed each commander-in-chief to prepare to transfer all his reserves to the zone of the other.⁷⁵

Although it was obvious that, with reserves so short as at present, Foch's important counter-strokes could not yet begin, the French leaders at this stage felt that the time was ripe for striking back. General Fayolle now brought in that most

⁷² That is, two kilometres from the front line. (*See French Official History, Tome VI, Vol. 2, pp. 289, 291.*)

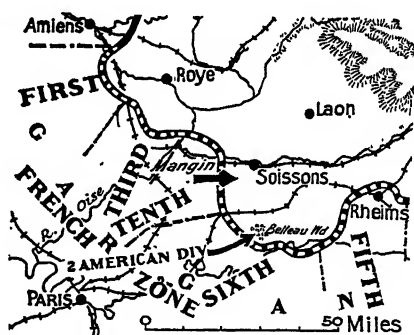
⁷³ Including the 4th Guard, 19th and Jäger Divs., first rate troops, lately employed at Villers-Bretonneux.

⁷⁴ *See French Official History, Tome VI, Vol. 2, p. 369.*

⁷⁵ On June 9 Haig, seeing that the XXII might be sent south, ordered the XIX Corps to be ready to replace it on the Somme.

vigorous of French fighting leaders, General Mangin,⁷⁶ and gave him command of five divisions with the task of launching a blow against the northern flank of the attacking Germans, between Montdidier and the Aronde stream. While Debeney and Mangin were with Fayolle, discussing the operation, Foch came in and ordered the quickest possible attack. Mangin told his troops that this stroke "should be the end of the defensive battle" and "should mark the stopping of the Germans, and the resumption of the offensive and should issue in success." Later Pétain, troubled by the fact that 12 French divisions had already been used in this battle, reduced Mangin's force by one division. In addition, only part of the artillery was in position in time, and, though some of the tanks did well and at one point the attack penetrated for more than a mile and a half, its effect was mainly moral; by the middle of June the German Noyon offensive and a co-operating attack ("Hammerschlag," June 12th) in front of Soissons towards Compiègne were over.

But Mangin, translated on June 16th to command the Tenth Army, farther south, on the western face of the Château-Thierry salient, continued his small attacks⁷⁷ which did for the French Army much the same service as the minor Australian offensives east of Amiens and Hazebrouck were doing for the British. Similar, but many times more costly, were the attacks made by the 2nd American



Attacks by Sixth and Tenth French Armies.

⁷⁶ Mangin, who commanded the Sixth French Army in Nivelle's offensive in April, 1917, had at first been made the chief scapegoat for its failure. He was, however, afterwards given an army corps and was now "reserve-commander" of the First French Army under General Debeney. About this time it was decided to make him commander of the Tenth Army, which had recently been inserted in front of Compiègne under General Maistre.

⁷⁷ Clemenceau on May 25 had urged Foch not to strike too soon, Clemenceau's policy and Pétain's being that a decisive combat must be avoided until the Americans had arrived in strength sufficient to make the result certain. From the time of Mangin's effort onwards, however, he and the French Government urged Foch to limited counter-attacks. (Mordacq: *Le Ministère Clemenceau*, Vol. VII, p. 126.)

Division farther south to recapture Belleau Wood. This struggle developed, as the Germans realised,⁷⁸ into an effort to prove, by the capture of the wood, the value of American troops, and the place was eventually taken at a cost of 3,266 officers and men.⁷⁹

The second great German offensive in 1918—that against the French—had so far, as General Mangin notes,⁸⁰ gained no important strategic end, and—like nearly every other of these immense attacks by either
The German side side on the Western Front—had left the attacking force in a very vulnerable salient, the great bulge of the German line to the Marne. But then—although Clemenceau and many other Frenchmen could not believe it, even when the evidence of the German leaders was added after the war—this offensive had not a strategic aim. The truth was as Foch had judged. On April 17th, the day on which Crown Prince Rupprecht's final effort at Hazebrouck failed, Ludendorff had decided to attract the Allies' reserves to some other part of the front before continuing his main attack against the British.

The most favourable operation in itself (he says) was to continue the attack on the English army at Ypres and Bailleul; but on that front the enemy was now so strong in numbers that it was impossible, even with rested troops. Before we could attack here again the enemy must become weaker, and our communications must be improved.⁸¹

He therefore looked elsewhere for a favourable point of attack, and found it in Champagne:

In front of the 7th and 1st Armies the enemy was weak. Troops had been sent from here to Ypres and replaced by tired English divisions. The strong positions in the hills certainly looked difficult to attack. But if our own artillery had done its work well, only the difficulties of the ground would remain to be dealt with. Early in April the Group of the German Crown Prince was directed to submit a plan of attack between Pinon and Rheims.⁸²

⁷⁸ See German official account: *Schlachten des Weltkrieges*, Vol. 33, p. 191.

⁷⁹ The 2nd American Division lost 9,500 between June 6 and July 9. It took 1,600 prisoners.

⁸⁰ *Comment Finit la Guerre*, p. 187.

⁸¹ *My War Memories*, Vol. II, p. 615.

⁸² Crown Prince Rupprecht's diary for April 18, General von Kuhl's history (*Der Weltkrieg, 1914-18*, Vol. II, pp. 353 et seq.), and his able report (*Entstehung, Durchführung und Zusammenbruch der Offensive von 1918*), and many other German works give clear accounts of this decision. An order of May 1 explained the object of the new stroke—"to ensure the possibility of an effective continuation of the offensive against the English."

The Noyon attack was part of the same general offensive; Ludendorff would have liked to launch it simultaneously with the stroke on the Aisne, but had not enough artillery without drawing on Crown Prince Rupprecht's force and so postponing the main thrust projected in Flanders. The attacks on the Aisne and the Oise would therefore be successive, with the least possible interval.

The abandonment of the Lys offensive had been ordered on April 29th; the attack on the Aisne was provisionally fixed for May 20th—the German Army was exhausted, and it would take Ludendorff until then at least to rest and train a sufficient force. While this force was preparing, the reserve for the later attack against the British also was being amassed—by the beginning of May orders were sent to pull attack-divisions out of the line; 32 were to be trained and built up to strength for this offensive, which would follow late in June. This was the reserve of whose existence Haig and Foch were so keenly aware. The proposed direction of its attack was several times changed.⁸³ But by May 5th Ludendorff had decided that the offensive should be made in Flanders. Its code-name was "New George." At the same time an attack between Arras and the Somme, "New Michael" would also be prepared for, partly as camouflage, but also for future delivery if need be.⁸⁴ In the Flanders objective the line to be first seized was the northern edge of Ypres-Reninghelst-Mont Noir-Flêtre-Strazeele, and the goal of the first main stage was to be Boesinghe-Roperinghe-Godewaersvelde-Borre. Crown Prince Rupprecht would have liked to widen this by including Nieppe Forest, but on May 15th received from Ludendorff the famous and ominous reply: "We can no longer stand heavy losses. Men are short—munitions

⁸³ At first it was to be a "New-George," in Flanders ("George," later "Georgette," having been the code-name of the German offensive delivered on April 9-10 on the Lys). On April 29 Crown Prince Rupprecht's staff suggested that it be instead a "New Michael," directed between Arras and the Somme ("Michael" had been the name for the great offensive of March 21). This suggestion, based on the ground that the Allies' reserves there were less strong, was approved by Ludendorff on May 1. The same day, however, Rupprecht's staff advised that New Michael would be unduly narrow—a condition which had contributed to the failure of the original "Michael." There were not enough troops to extend it, as at first intended, to the north of Arras. Moreover the lack of shelter on the old Somme battlefield would render difficult the preparations.

⁸⁴ In mid-May the names of the two enterprises were changed, it being discovered that the Allies had found the old code-name "Michael," in a German officer's diary. New George (Flanders) became "Hagen," and New Michael (Somme-Arras) became "Wilhelm."

we have." Much, Ludendorff said, would depend on what happened in the meanwhile.

Such were Ludendorff's intentions when the blow of May 27th was struck. Upon the urging of the German Crown Prince, part of whose group⁸⁵ would make the attack, its original objectives—the lines of the Rivers Aisne and Vesle—had been extended to include the hills beyond Soissons and south of the Vesle;⁸⁶ but his contention that it should be further widened, beyond Rheims as well as on the Oise, could not be agreed to since this would have necessitated the postponement of Crown Prince Rupprecht's undertaking.⁸⁷ The blow was eventually struck by 20 divisions with 5 others in support.⁸⁸ The swift advance on the first day astonished the German commanders only less than the French. The Vesle was crossed without using the second-line divisions. By noon, the objective having already been attained, Ludendorff extended it, and he eventually decided to let the attack have its head and reach, if it could with the troops available, the line Compiègne-Dormans-Epernay. This offensive brought 50,000 prisoners and 600 captured guns, but already by May 31st it was clear that it was coming to a standstill far short of its new objective. The Noyon offensive was to follow on June 7th, but, despite all possible haste, could not be launched before the 9th. It was delivered by 11 divisions in first line with 7 in support, and brought in 15,000 prisoners and 150 guns, but progressed only ten kilometres. On the other hand Crown Prince Rupprecht's reserve still existed though somewhat



Sectors of German armies showing proposed attacks.

⁸⁵ This group comprised the Eighteenth, Seventh, First, and Third Armies.

⁸⁶ Another reason for extending the objective was that, as the time approached, the conditions seemed more favourable.

⁸⁷ Von Kuhl: *Der Weltkrieg*, Vol. II, p. 358.

⁸⁸ Including a number of divisions already in the line. Two more divisions joined in later on the western flank. Altogether 41 German divisions were used in the course of the Aisne offensive.

diminished; by June 9th, 11 "mobile"⁸⁹ divisions had been borrowed from it.

The unexpected success of the German attack on the Aisne and the resulting confusion had strained the French Army severely, both in moral and in numerical strength. It lost 98,160 officers and men, and the British IX Corps 28,679.⁹⁰ Between June 9th and 15th the French lost another 41,000. The fact that Foch had been completely surprised by the Aisne attack could not reasonably be held against him, since, under any practicable system, his eyes and ears must be the intelligence staffs of Haig's and Pétain's armies, and except at the eleventh hour these gave him no warning. Nevertheless, especially among the political leaders, Foch's prestige was, for the time being, affected, the French in particular finding it difficult to reconcile themselves to his insistence upon maintaining reserves in the north, where no attack came, while powerful blows were being showered so near to Paris. Clemenceau, reserving his criticisms of both Foch and Pétain for the ears of Mordacq⁹¹ and the President, defended them against the politicians, but some heads had to fly. The initial cause of the debacle was the failure to carry out Pétain's original order to fight the enemy at the second line.⁹² The chief offender, General Duchêne of the Sixth Army, behaved so stoutly during the crisis as to excite the admiration of Foch and Clemenceau, but he had to go, though changes were not made until the crisis was over. On June 10th Clemenceau went to Foch and Pétain with a list of generals, especially of the older men, whose removal was suggested, and, as a result, many changes were made. In the Sixth Army Duchêne was replaced by General Degoutte. The Fifth and Tenth, which during the Aisne operations had been inserted respectively on the eastern and western sides of the new salient, were given to Generals Buat and Mangin. Even Pétain's position was sufficiently

⁸⁹ That is, divisions equipped with full horse-teams for the artillery and transport.

⁹⁰ These are the figures given in the *French Official History*. The loss of the Americans is there given as 474, but this does not include the heavy casualties of the 2nd Div. from June 6 onward (see footnote on p. 178).

⁹¹ His *chef-de-cabinet*, military secretary and intimate adviser.

⁹² Pétain, having finally authorised the departure from it, bore the nominal, but not the moral, responsibility.

shaken to cause Clemenceau to recall General Guillaumat from the chief command at Salonica in case it might prove necessary to change the French Commander-in-Chief. As for the command of the Central Group of Armies,⁹³ which had suffered the disaster, General Franchet d'Espèrey was translated by Clemenceau (without consulting Lloyd George) to fill Guillaumat's place at Salonica, his own place being taken by General Maistre.⁹⁴

But, to guard against a repetition of the shock of May 27th, changes of system also were required. Against surprise there could be only one satisfactory precaution—more intense efforts to secure intelligence. Foch insisted on this and, in particular, on June 11th ordered that the roads and railways behind the German front should be watched by air reconnaissance at night. It was apparently with difficulty, however, that he could bring himself to take the step Pétain most desired—that of enforcing the principle of resisting the Germans at the second line. His temperament was all against giving up the front area, and the most that the recent disasters could wring from him was an order, issued on June 16th, that, as soon as a hostile attack could be foreseen, both the first and second lines should be sufficiently garrisoned.⁹⁵ Pétain objected that it was impossible to garrison both lines—only north of the Somme were there sufficient troops for that. Clemenceau stepped into the controversy and supported Foch, whose note was accordingly passed on by Pétain to the French armies.

At this stage, however, Pétain remembered that, by the Beauvais agreement, the issue of tactical orders to the national armies had been reserved for their several commanders, only the strategic direction being conferred upon Foch.⁹⁶ He accordingly ordered that the main line of resistance must be at least two kilometres from the enemy's front, and must be secured by two-thirds or three-quarters of the garrison, only a minimum of troops being placed in the outpost-line. The

⁹³ Till now called the Northern Group (G.A.N.), but now the Central (G.A.C.).

⁹⁴ From the Tenth Army. Apparently owing to objections from Foch, Pétain lost his own chief-of-staff, General Anthoine. General Micheler (Fifth Army), "who loses his head in a crisis" (Poincaré, *Au Service de la France*, Vol. X, p. 229), was sent on a mission to America.

⁹⁵ *French Official History*, Tome VI, Vol. 2, p. 397. This history is also the authority for much that follows.

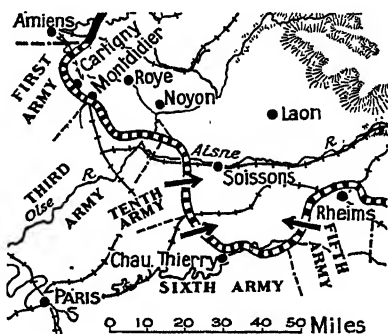
⁹⁶ Vol. V, note on p. 272. But Clemenceau on June 26 placed Pétain directly under Foch's orders without right of appeal.

artillery must be farther back than the main line. If there were vital points in the front line, they must be secured not by being strongly garrisoned, but by keeping back, out of reach of the enemy's bombardment, reserves with which such points could be retaken.

The whole Allied front now again awaited signs of the next German attack, which Foch on June 16th still expected to fall upon the British.

"To give satisfaction" to General Pershing, who was pressing for the earliest possible formation of a self-contained American Army, Foch agreed that the I American Corps should be formed on the Château-Thierry front, where the 2nd and 3rd American Divisions were already in the line.⁹⁷ It was proposed to bring in

the II American Corps there later, and Pershing entertained a passing hope that an American Army might be formed there, and thus come into existence sooner than on the front allotted for that purpose, in north-eastern France.⁹⁸ Meanwhile Foch worked steadily on the preparation for his counter-offensive, now planned to be launched about July 15th against *both* flanks of the salient formed by the German offensive of May 27th.⁹⁹ The project, though known to Pétain, who on June 14th was ordered to organise the attack, was unknown to Pershing and Haig. But that the Allied Commander-in-Chief was, whenever possible, building up a big reserve, to be flung at some favourable moment against the enemy, was the hope and belief of the average front-line man—including the Australian soldier, to whom this narrative must now return.



Arrows show intended attacks.

⁹⁷ The 1st American Div. was up on the Somme battle-front at Cantigny, which on May 28 it had attacked and captured.

⁹⁸ Foch, however, would not encourage this project.

⁹⁹ *French Official History, Tome VI, Vol. 2, p. 404.*

CHAPTER VI

MONASH SUCCEEDS BIRDWOOD

BEFORE Birdwood, with his chief-of-staff, General White, worked out at the wish of Haig and Rawlinson the secret scheme for the offensive which Rawlinson's army might be requested to launch in the Somme region, all four knew that Birdwood and White would not be there to help in launching it. Sir Douglas Haig had decided that he required another army headquarters, to control, at first, some of the recuperating divisions in reserve but later to take command of a sector of front between the First Army and the Third and probably to carry out the offensive on the southern side of the Lys re-entrant. Birdwood, who through the retirement of older officers in the Indian Army had in October, 1917, been promoted to general, was the senior officer available—indeed he was the only full general among the army corps commanders in France—and his thoroughly successful leadership of the Australian forces had rendered it almost certain that he would be selected to fill the next vacancy in the army commands. On May 13th he was informed that he would be given the new Fifth Army.¹

It is certain that Sir Douglas Haig had a second reason for considering the selection a suitable one. He would be genuinely glad to see the Australian Corps led by an Australian officer. It is true that the Australian Government in its requests to have the A.I.F. commanded and staffed by Australians² had

¹ Five British Army headquarters had functioned on the Western Front from the time when Gough was placed in command of the Reserve (later Fifth) Army, intended to break through in the First Somme battle, until Gen. Plumer was sent in November, 1917, to command the British force in Italy. There followed several confusing changes of name: first the Second, and later the Fifth, Army became the Fourth when Gen. Rawlinson was appointed to them. For a time the B.E.F. contained only four armies, though after Gough's fall—until the British Government ordered him home—a nucleus headquarters, known as Reserve Army Headquarters, was formed under him at Cr cy-en-Ponthieu to control work on the new lines of defence. Birdwood's army headquarters was to be formed at Cr cy but later would move to Th rouanne.

² See *Vol. V*, pp. 8-10.

never contemplated the replacement of General Birdwood—his service to the A.I.F. was far too highly appreciated and his personality too congenial to the troops and the nation; but Haig recognised that all Australians would be pleased to have an Australian in that command, and it fitted in with his cherished conception of the Imperial General Staff.

Moreover Haig himself had made the discovery of an Australian officer who, as he strongly felt, was worthy of the position. In December, 1916, when the 3rd Australian Division first entered France after its thorough training under Maj.-General Monash in England, Haig visited it and, with Monash, inspected its reserve brigade. The weight of the Somme battle, which had just ended in the south, had been heavy on the Commander-in-Chief as well as on his troops, and Monash noted that Haig "looked grey and old." But Monash's ability was never more brilliantly displayed than on such inspections. His organisation for them was minute, the timing perfect, the programme untiringly thought out, and his explanations to the visiting officer a masterpiece of clear exposition. Three months earlier he had deeply impressed the King at an extraordinarily successful review of his division and 10,000 other Australian and New Zealand troops at Bulford Field on Salisbury Plain.⁸ Now, when the same welcome efficiency was exhibited in the meadows behind Armentières, the sight of it may well have had an emotional effect on the tired Commander-in-Chief. At all events this usually cold and unexpressive leader, on parting from the middle-aged, Jewish-Australian citizen soldier after the inspection

put his arm around my shoulder (Monash wrote) as I rode beside him, and with much feeling and warmth he said—"You have a very fine division. I wish you all sorts of good luck, old man."

⁸ Monash described it in his *War Letters* (pp. 131-3). For nearly two hours the troops were marching past the King in column of platoons. "It was for the division a veritable triumph, and, apart from being by far the biggest and most splendid, it was much the most successful review I have ever been present at." Although the troops had five roads of approach to the review ground, and the King was not due till 11.15, they had to start from their various camps at 7.15 in order to be assembled in time. Monash spent two and a half hours with the King "on a footing of perfect freedom," and finished by bringing him to the railway platform one minute before the royal train was due to start. "Splendid timing, wasn't it, Clive?" said the King to Lt.-Col. Clive Wigram, as they stood on the platform. During the review the King told Monash, "It's a very fine division. I don't know that I've ever seen a finer one." It is quite possible that King George spoke of his impression to Sir Douglas Haig.

That first impression Haig never relinquished. Several times during the preparations for the battles of Messines and Third Ypres he visited Monash's headquarters, and in August, 1917, Monash noted:⁴

Birdwood told me that the Commander-in-Chief had a very high opinion of my division and of me personally and had gone out of his way to express himself in terms of praise of my work. Birdwood added that it was rare for the Chief to do this. White entirely confirmed these statements.

Nor was it Monash alone who recorded this approbation. Haig, after a later review of the 3rd Division before its entry into Third Ypres, noted:

A very fine body of men. The parade was a great success. . . . Every detail . . . had been carefully thought out beforehand, hence the parade was so successful. I think Monash a good head and commands his division well.

After the troops had passed, Haig stayed for an hour chatting with Monash and the senior officers of the division. That night he had Monash to dine privately with himself and the two senior officers of his general staff, Sir Launcelot Kiggell and Maj.-General Butler. Describing the dinner to his wife, Monash wrote:⁵

There were only the four of us present. After each course was served, the mess stewards went out of the room and the doors were locked from inside, until the Chief gave a sign for the next course. So you may imagine that some very important and confidential matters were discussed, about which I need say no more than that there is no question that we are very rapidly wearing down the German military power, and it is now only a question of time and weather. Nothing could have been more charming than the affability and camaraderie of these three great soldiers, upon whom rests the whole burden of the British Western Front.

Haig was keen to see the dominion leaders trained to the highest command. In his vision of the Imperial General Staff he contemplated that the highest post might go equally to a British or an oversea commander, and he would have liked to see them all combined in a common service. Birdwood's experience in the Australian command had shown him the im-

⁴ *War Letters of General Monash*, pp. 151, 185-6.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 193-4.

possibility of this: he had frequently had to stand out against the wishes of G.H.Q., particularly against its natural tendency to intervene in promotions and appointments in the Australian service with which, under authority from the Australian Government,⁶ he (or his delegates) alone had the right to deal. Haig, though entirely just and honourable in his dealings with his subordinates, resembled most other strong men in disliking opposition from them. He had sometimes resented Birdwood's freedom, and this friction may have increased his inclination for a change. In July, 1917, immediately after the command of the Canadian Corps had been given to a Canadian, Sir Arthur Currie,⁷ Haig, visiting I Anzac Headquarters in Hazebrouck, said to Brudenell White, chief of Birdwood's staff and then generally reputed as the most brilliant officer in the Australian service:

"Why don't you have a corps commander of your own? You know, *you* ought to be commanding this corps."

White said, "God forbid. General Birdwood has a position among Australians which is far too valuable to lose."

Haig said he knew all that; but Birdwood could have an administrative command. White replied that Birdwood's great reputation in Australia depended on his being the fighting commander of their troops. . . . Haig turned away impatiently and since then has been very short with White.⁸

Monash, on the other hand, still maintained views not dissimilar from those of Haig concerning the ideal relations of the dominion and British commands. In the early days of his service in Egypt he had argued that his brigade should now come under the British command and not that of General Bridges, then administering the A.I.F., and in 1918 he was still averse from the tendency to assert, at least in any matter affecting the employment of his troops, the Australian Government's control.

Monash (says the diary already quoted) is very full of the idea that he is absolutely under G.H.Q.—he must not consider Australian demands—once he is under G.H.Q., G.H.Q. is all that he has to consider; a simple rule . . .

⁶ Conferred in the Order in Council of 15 Sep. 1915, making him G.O.C., A.I.F., after the death of Gen. Bridges, and in later amendments.

⁷ On Gen. Byng's being promoted to command Third Army, 9 June 1917, in place of Gen. Allenby, sent to Palestine.

⁸ The quotation is from a private but completely reliable diary.

Whether Haig discussed with him the scheme of an Imperial General Staff is not recorded; in any case Monash had then come successfully through the test of divisional command in great battles—Messines and Third Ypres; and by the beginning of October Haig's mind swung strongly to the notion that he would be the best commander for the Australian fighting forces. Haig took the opportunity of sounding separately two Australian Press correspondents on the matter. To Keith Murdoch, the powerful London representative of several Australian papers, who visited the front in September, he suggested that Monash should be appointed to command the I Anzac Corps and Birdwood given the administrative control of the A.I.F. A few days later, after his famous interview with the war correspondents before the Battle of Passchendaele,⁹ he detained the senior Australian correspondent, Bean, in order to discuss the Australian point of view on several questions, including that of an Imperial General Staff. He made it clear that he fully recognized the strength and value of national feeling among Australian troops.

He thought each dominion ought to be complete after the war up to the highest commands. We had some very capable commanders in the Australian force—"now—er—there's General Monash, for example. He is a very capable man. He has made a great success of everything he has touched—a very solid man."

Bean replied that the independent standing of General Birdwood was of great value to Australia, and added—what was then true of most Australians associated with the staff and the command—"We look upon General White as the greatest soldier we have by a long way." Haig said that he "knew General White was a most capable officer," but he wondered why Australia had not promoted him.

Haig's belief in Monash was not in the least disturbed by these interviews, or by one in which Birdwood, after the Passchendaele fighting, criticised Monash's leadership—criticism which Haig, not quite fairly, attributed to the fact that Monash's division was not in Birdwood's corps.

Although at the end of 1917 the promotion of Birdwood to general aroused at some of the Australian headquarters an

⁹ See Vol. IV, p. 908.

expectation that he would soon be appointed to an army,¹⁰ few of the troops dreamed of such a contingency. On March 18th Birdwood wrote to the Minister for Defence in Melbourne (Senator Pearce):

Had I to give up the command of the corps, but remain in France, I should, I think, recommend for your approval that Gen. Monash might command the corps, while I retain the position of G.O.C., A.I.F. However, this is a contingency which I hope will not arise. . . .

Personally (he wrote in the same letter) . . . I have no other wish than to remain in my present position until the end of the war. . . . I am prepared to forego advancement rather than leave the A.I.F.

Birdwood had frequently spoken thus, and now, when suddenly summoned to G.H.Q. and told by the Chief of the General Staff, Lieut.-General Lawrence, that the Commander-in-Chief wished him to take at once the command of the assembling Fifth Army, he asked whether this was an order and whether it was open to him to refuse. He had been with the Anzac Corps for three and a half years and, rather than leave it, was ready to give up all prospect of promotion. Lawrence replied that at the present time appointments were not "offered," but the selected men were ordered to take them up. Birdwood's name, therefore, had already been submitted to the Cabinet. If, however, he absolutely and definitely declined to take over the command, Haig would consider his wishes, but he should reflect that by doing so he would block promotion in the A.I.F. and no Australian officer could ever hope to rise to command the Australian Corps. This appeal was decisive. Birdwood now asked whether the corps and other Australian units might be sent to his army—which would bring about a partial fulfilment of the earlier wishes of the Australian Government for the creation of an "Australian Army" on the Western Front.¹¹ Lawrence replied that he realised that the Australian troops appreciated being with Birdwood and therefore, whenever the tactical situation allowed, they would be sent to his army. The intention at that time apparently was that it should at first comprise the 1st

¹⁰ As always, Gen. Walker, the well-loved British officer in command of the 1st Div., and next in seniority to Birdwood, maintained, in opposition to his own interest and inclination, that Birdwood's successor must be an Australian. For Walker's similar attitude on earlier occasions, see *Vols. I* (pp. 234-5) and *II* (p. 423).

¹¹ See *Vol. II*, pp. 155-6.

Australian Division and two British corps, the Australian Corps to be sent to it later.¹²

The discussion then turned to the question of Birdwood's successor. A year earlier he would certainly have recommended White, notwithstanding the fact that White's outstanding services as a staff officer had led to his being retained continuously upon staff work. In 1916 Senator Pearce had suggested White or Monash for the command of the 3rd Division. Monash himself, at that time writing to his family, said that White was "far and away the ablest soldier Australia had ever turned out,"¹³ and later in the Australian Corps, like nearly every other Australian leader, he constantly went to White for advice. Even in the critical night of March 26th-27th when, hastily summoned to the Somme, he was throwing his division across the path of the Germans, he telephoned to White in Flanders for his opinion as to the frontages suitable to be occupied in such circumstances by his battalions. It was sometimes argued that White, not having commanded a brigade or division, would lack the experience necessary for commanding the corps, but Birdwood knew that, at least during his own absences, White had, in fact, frequently commanded it; whichever divisional commander was acting knew, as did Birdwood, that the control was perfectly safe in White's hands.

But, though Birdwood himself was most attracted by White's qualities of mind and character, it was impossible for him to pass over so capable and successful an officer as Monash. Monash was White's senior. He had made a thorough success of his divisional command. In addition to the Commander-in-Chief's outspoken belief in him, which weighed considerably, encomiums on Monash had poured in from senior officers concerned with his conduct of the fighting before Amiens. The commander of the VII Corps, Lieut.-General Congreve, had volunteered the opinion that Monash was the best divisional commander he had met on the Western Front. Monash indeed stood well in the opinion of every British general under whom he had served. Years afterwards Birdwood said that for him-

¹² Eventually the progress of the campaign prevented the allotment to it of any Australian division.

¹³ *War Letters*, p. 112.

self the choice had been a most difficult one. But it was made easier by his being able to offer White the position of chief of the general staff of his new army, an appointment which, in accordance with his policy of training dominion officers, Haig was glad to make, and which might—so at least Birdwood thought, and wrote to Senator Pearce—prove a stepping stone to the post of Chief of the General Staff at G.H.Q. should that vacancy ever occur. In fairness to General Hobbs of the 5th Australian Division, who in seniority came immediately between Monash and White, Birdwood mentioned that he, too, was fit for a corps command; but Birdwood felt that the leadership of the Australian Corps required something more than the ordinary qualifications, and, in the interests of Australia, should be filled by a leader of outstanding strength and personality. He had felt that Hobbs, though "thorough, able, loyal, and courageous," leant upon his corps commander for support and might find difficulty in standing alone. In any case, with White and Monash available, he was not really in the running.

There remained the question—who should now exercise the administrative command of the Australian Imperial Force, controlling promotions, appointments, transfers, reinforcement, and pay. It will be remembered that when the first Australian contingent sailed in 1914, General Bridges, the commander of the 1st Division, was given administrative control over the other troops in the contingent as well as his own. For the sake of the contentment of the force, it was advisable that the holder of these powers should be some leader in whose fairness and judgment all had confidence, and, on the death of Bridges in Gallipoli, they were conferred by the Australian Government upon General Birdwood.¹⁴ Birdwood's control was exercised through a small separate "A.I.F." staff at his headquarters, under the D.A.G., A.I.F. (Col. Dodds), and had as its main instrument the great A.I.F. Headquarters (under Brig.-Genl. Griffiths) at Horseferry Road, London. That a commander busy with his duties at the front should also control something like a War Office in London was an arrangement open to obvious criticism. For example, some of the rulings of Birdwood

¹⁴ For short intervals they were held by Gens. Legge and Godley.

had to apply to the Australian forces in Palestine, and these felt—and in some respects undoubtedly were—cut off and neglected. The difficulty, however, was partly overcome by Birdwood's being authorised to delegate his powers and conferring part of them on Lieut.-General Chauvel, then commanding the Desert Mounted Corps. In spite of all criticisms the system worked, and brought with it one immense advantage, not enjoyed in the same degree, perhaps, by any Allied force—that of almost complete freedom from political interference.

It was the prestige of Birdwood's leadership in the field, combined with his integrity and his good judgment of character, that brought this immunity. Enjoying, as he did, the trust of the Australian nation, his position was very strong. If he now gave up the administrative command its chief claimant would be the next senior in the A.I.F., Maj.-General M'Cay, then commanding the Australian depots on Salisbury Plain, whose capacity was great but whose judgment and powers of leadership were not trusted. Birdwood felt sure that he himself would be able to carry on the administration of the A.I.F. at his new army headquarters. White, the chief supporter of the system, and Dodds would still be at his elbow; the Australian divisions would probably be in his army; all danger of M'Cay's securing the command would be averted; and last, but not least, Birdwood himself would maintain his connection with the A.I.F., a condition which he intensely desired and which certainly would please the troops.

For these reasons he asked to be allowed to retain the administrative command when accepting that of the Fifth Army. Haig agreed, subject to the Australian Government's consent.

For a few days General Birdwood imparted the news of his approaching departure, and of the consequent changes, only to Generals White, Monash, and Hobbs. Each of these expressed his fear that, if Birdwood relinquished the administrative command, M'Cay would endeavour to succeed him, and all expressed relief when Birdwood told them that he hoped to retain that control. In France the promotions at the top of the A.I.F.

ladder would make necessary other movements on the next rungs. As chief of the corps staff General White would be replaced by Col. Blamey, another officer of the Australian permanent staff who had passed through the Staff College and, except for a short term in command of the 2nd Battalion and 1st Brigade, had been employed continuously on the staff, rising from G.S.O. (3) of the 1st Division at Mena camp to be its G.S.O. (1) at Pozières in 1916. A man of nimble intellect and wide comprehension, he had set himself to follow the footsteps of White, whom he greatly admired. Blamey had no real competitor in the present selection; his capacity was outstanding, and no other available officer of the general staff in the Australian divisions had anything approaching his experience. Apart from some possible doubt as to his possessing the necessary tact, there was never any question as to his suitability for the post.¹⁵ Somewhat less easy was the choice of an officer to command the 3rd Division in place of Monash, but Birdwood had for several months been contemplating the appointment of Australian leaders to the 1st and 2nd Divisions, whose British commanders (Walker and Smyth) at his request were to be transferred to commands in the British Army as soon as suitable vacancies occurred.¹⁶ The Australian officers with whom Birdwood had decided to fill the next vacancies were Brig.-Genls. Rosenthal of the 9th Brigade, Glasgow of the 13th, Gellibrand of the 12th, and, after them, Brand of the 4th.¹⁷ For particular reasons he resolved that Monash should be succeeded in the 3rd Division by Gellibrand.¹⁸ Rosenthal would go at once to the 2nd Division, which General Smyth

¹⁵ His place in the 1st Div. was taken at first by Maj. G. F. G. Wiecek, and later by Lt.-Col. A. M. Ross.

¹⁶ The letter stating that he could replace them (and also Br.-Gens. Lesslie and Hobkirk) by Australians was sent on 5 Mar. 1918.—See *Vol. V*, p. 15; for an estimate of their services, see *ibid.*, pp. 16-18.

¹⁷ Estimates of these officers have been given in previous volumes of this work: of Rosenthal in *Vol. V* (pp. 300-1); Glasgow *Vols. III* (pp. 839-40) and *V* (pp. 571-2); Gellibrand *Vols. I* (pp. 79-81), *III* (pp. 601-2), and *IV* (pp. 482-3); Brand *Vol. I* (pp. 134-5).

¹⁸ Monash (whom Birdwood consulted) would have liked to give it to Br.-Gen. McNicoll (10th), in whom he had special faith, and who was senior to all three. Rosenthal was a fellow brigadier in the 3rd Div., and his appointment over McNicoll's head might be somewhat galling to the latter. It was to avoid this that the 3rd was given to Gellibrand, a Tasmanian, who had served for many years as an officer in the British Army and passed through the Staff College. He had been almost continuously with the A.I.F. in the field, whereas McNicoll, through wounds, had been for a year and a half away from the front. Monash, after talking them over, agreed with these decisions.

was leaving immediately;¹⁹ Glasgow would go to the 1st as soon as G.H.Q. provided a British appointment for General Walker, who, in accordance with Birdwood's wish, would be the last British officer to leave the A.I.F. Gellibrand's brigade (12th) would be given to Lieut.-Col. Leane of the 48th, an experienced and capable leader of outstanding spirit; and Rosenthal's was allotted to Lieut.-Col. Goddard, its senior battalion commander, whose conduct of the fighting at Villers-Bretonneux on April 4th had brought him much credit.

Birdwood on May 13th cabled his proposals to the Minister for Defence stating his reasons and asking approval. In his reply Senator Pearce agreed but suggested that White might stay at corps headquarters for three months with Blamey as his understudy. Birdwood's continuance in the administrative command was only provisionally approved pending Cabinet consideration. Before this reply was received Blamey had been brought down from Flanders to understudy the part of White, who would stay on until Monash was satisfied.

Blamey's arrival at corps headquarters on May 16th was the first outward sign of the impending changes, and from that day the news began to spread, though only gradually, among the five divisions. Birdwood was known to almost every man of them and his approaching departure was almost completely unexpected. It is safe to say that every one heard it with a sharp pang of regret.²⁰ But the first shock was quickly followed by growing satisfaction that an Australian was now in command of the corps. To most of the troops outside his own division Monash was then merely a name; though he was

**An
objection
raised**

¹⁹ He was appointed on May 21 to command the 58th Div. (which, under Maj.-Gen. Cator, had fought beside the Australians at Villers-Bretonneux). Like Walker, Smyth displayed a most generous spirit. He wrote to Monash: "I rejoice to think that you will lead that Corps to further victories, and that the ambition is being realised of placing it upon a strictly territorial basis throughout, including every branch of the staff. The fortune of war has indeed treated me kindly in enabling me to have the honour of being associated with your historic force." After the war Gen. Smyth transferred his home to Australia, settling on the land in Victoria.

²⁰ A diarist notes the first expressions of opinion that he heard. A man of the 2nd Div., casually met, said: "I hear we're losing our great general . . . General Birdwood. The boys won't like that." A staff officer said it was "bad luck losing White." A brigadier remarked that one thing pleased him—Birdwood was still retaining his connection with the A.I.F. as its G.O.C.

reputed to be thoughtful for his men, his capacity was known to few. Yet most welcomed him keenly.

But there was one section to which the event came as a bitter disappointment. This was a small group, mainly of staff or others closely associated with headquarters—but including several of the most prominent and honoured names in the force—who since its earliest days had been associated with General White, and who recognised, as others had no opportunity of doing, not merely the brilliance of his intellect but the nobility of his character and the outstanding part—far beyond that of any other leader—that (as chief-of-staff first to Bridges and then to Birdwood) he had played in building up the Australian Imperial Force. By these observers since the death of Bridges he had always been held as easily first among the Australian leaders, but his guiding rule of conduct was well summed up by his old chief, Liéut.-General Sir Edward Hutton, who in 1916, hearing in England many encomiums upon his work in Gallipoli, wrote to him :

Go on as you have begun. Oblivious for yourself and of your own interests or your own future, do what you know to be right and shame the devil.

How for three and a half crowded years White had lavished mental, moral, and physical effort in accordance with that principle, tactfully guiding but, where necessary, rigidly confronting those in higher as well as in lower authority, sacrificing without a thought his own chances of advancement where he felt that the interest of the Allies or the A.I.F. required it, only those closely associated with him knew. He could already have been chief of the general staff of one of Haig's armies, but had refused the appointment because he felt that his duty lay in helping Birdwood with the A.I.F. That this maker of the A.I.F. should now be not merely passed over for its command, but actually withdrawn from its service, seemed to this not uninfluential section a deplorable circumstance. That Monash was in some respects an outstandingly capable commander was well recognised in staff circles, but though a lucid thinker, a wonderful organiser, and accustomed to take endless pains, he had not the physical audacity that Australian troops were thought to require in their leaders, and it was for his ability

in administration rather than for tactical skill that he was then reputed. Moreover, a few of those who knew both men doubted whether Monash's judgment would be as resistant as White's to the promptings of personal ambition or whether he was as well equipped to overbear a wrongly insistent superior or the strain of a great disaster. They knew that Monash had an almost Napoleonic skill in transmitting the impression of his capacity, and there was some belief—quite erroneous, as appeared later—that he had sought this appointment by every means in his power.²¹ It was realised that White's conception of loyalty, on the other hand, would not allow him to raise a finger to grasp any advancement that did not come to him in accordance with the strict usages of the army.

Although these or similar views were entertained separately by a number of prominent Australian soldiers and officials, most of whom probably thought them more widespread than was the case, it is unlikely that the opinions would have resulted in action had they not been shared by one who was free to act, if he chose, unbound by duty towards the military chiefs. The senior war correspondent of the A.I.F., Bean, had retained his civilian status deliberately, on the advice of Birdwood and White,²² who held that he should be free of their control as regards his work, and able to express an independent opinion—whether adverse to themselves or not—upon any matter concerning the Australian force, subject only to the rules of censorship. When on May 16th Birdwood informed Bean of the proposed appointments and that the Australian Government had been asked to approve of them, the matter was immediately discussed with deep concern at the Australian correspondents' headquarters at the Brewery Farm, Querrieu.²³ The Australian Government might be petitioned through Keith Murdoch in London, Murdoch being in constant communication with the

²¹ It was known that, when the three new Australian divisions were being formed in Jan. 1916, Monash had suggested to Br.-Gen. Holmes that a protest should be made against the appointment of a British leader for the 4th Div., and that Holmes had refused. It was not, however, known that Monash had then accepted Holmes's advice. In his *War Letters* (pp. 107-8) he says: "I have firmly resolved not to intrigue or canvas for promotion in any way, and if Australia chooses to let her forces be exploited to find jobs for unemployed senior British officers, that is not my affair."

²² He was graded as captain, but the position did not carry rank, though the title was, by mistake, often given to him.

²³ See p. 8.

Australian Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, to whom, by arrangement, he cabled more or less "inside" information concerning the course of the war. It was decided to urge the Government to give Monash the administrative command and White the command of the corps—the conviction being that these offices obviously suited their respective capacities. It was strongly argued that, if Birdwood accepted a post that would immerse him in interests outside the A.I.F., he could not adequately discharge as a "side line" so great a business as the administration of the A.I.F., and that any attempt to do so must end in failure. In raising this question the little group at the Farm only forestalled the certain course of events—the problem would inevitably have called for solution in the near future. But by the manner of and reason for its raising it became entangled in personalities which obscured the true issue, and a final answer to it was never given. On May 18th Bean, who at all times was left free to travel where he liked within the Australian sphere, from front line to Horseferry Road, crossed to London with Will Dyson, the official artist, and eventually swung Murdoch to the desired view concerning the active and administrative commands. Murdoch promised to telegraph to W. M. Hughes, then arriving with Sir Joseph Cook in western America on his way to the Imperial War Conference. Murdoch's cable painted a picture in much stronger colours than most writers would have considered justifiable,²⁴ and ended by urging Hughes to have the appointments made "temporary," so that the decision might be deferred until he arrived in London.

Meanwhile Bean, returning to France, had informed White and Birdwood of his visit to London and of the objections raised to Birdwood's retention of the A.I.F. command. On May 19th Birdwood had cabled to the Minister for Defence urging that he should be confirmed in it:

I am prepared (he added) to be relieved of the command of my army rather than be cut off from my old comrades.

Col. Dodds, D.A.G., A.I.F., also telegraphed that the delay in making the appointments was having a disturbing effect on

²⁴ Murdoch was, however, doubtless misled by Bean and Dyson, who believed that their views represented those widely held in the A.I.F.

the minds of senior officers at a critical moment.²⁵ The Cabinet in Australia had already, on May 21st, approved of Birdwood's retention of the administrative command. The orders for the new appointments were promulgated on the 23rd. Meanwhile, however, Murdoch's cable had reached the Australian Prime Minister and had immediate effect. On May 24th the Minister for Defence in Melbourne received a cable from Hughes urging that the matters for decision "be held over until our arrival in London." There followed one from General Birdwood stating that the Army Council had decided that his appointment to command an army was only temporary. It seems probable that this development may have been due to Murdoch's direct influence with Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, whose confidence he enjoyed.²⁶

Meanwhile, at 11 a.m. on May 31st, Birdwood and White left the Australian Corps Headquarters for that of the Fifth Army, and Monash, promoted to lieutenant-general, with Blamey as his chief staff officer, took control of the Australian Corps.

What manner of man was the citizen soldier who amid this unfortunate controversy—the occurrence of which was unknown to any but a few of the leaders—was called to command the Australian Corps?

It may be safely premised that, if those who were endeavouring to unseat him had known the life story of John Monash, no voice would have been raised against his appointment even if some continued to doubt—as indeed they may do to this day—whether in all possibilities it was the best. Monash was born on the 23rd of June, 1865, at 1 Rachel Terrace, Dudley Street, West Melbourne, the eldest child of young

²⁵ The reference was perhaps chiefly to Br.-Gen. Elliott, whose seniority was the same as Gellibrand's and Glasgow's. He felt himself to be superseded by Gellibrand's promotion and wrote most vehemently to White. White gave him the opportunity of withdrawing this letter without its being shown to Birdwood, and Elliott took advantage of this generosity and did so. But to the end of his life he deeply resented this "supersession." Actually Birdwood was a keen admirer of most of his qualities, but believed that an erratic quality in his judgment unfitted him for higher command than he then held.

²⁶ Murdoch invited Lord Milner, Mr. Bonar Law, and Sir Henry Wilson to meet Hughes at a private dinner party on his arrival in London, in order to enable the Australian Prime Minister "to secure a thorough grip of the situation."

Jewish parents married two years before at Stettin in Pomerania (North Prussia). His father, Louis Monash, had emigrated to Australia in 1853²⁷ to seek his fortune on the gold-fields, but, finding better prospects in commerce, entered into partnership with Mr. L. Martin as an importer of fancy goods.²⁸ Late in 1862, at the age of 31, he made a voyage to Europe to secure stock and visit his people, and there met and married Bertha Manasse, ten years younger, sister of his brother's wife. In 1863 they returned to Melbourne, and here the first nine years of John Monash's life were spent. His mother was a cultured woman who taught her little son at the age of five to play the piano,²⁹ and trained her children, when a little older, to regard it as a privilege to read to her Dickens, Scott, Lytton, George Eliot as well as German and French classics in the original tongues.³⁰ John's first school was St. Stephen's, Docker's Hill, Richmond, where the attention of the headmaster was attracted by his capacity in English subjects, and that of the boys by his skill for amusing them with drawings. But it was at the age of nine, on his father's taking up business in 1874 in the remote country town of Jerilderie in New South Wales, that he came under a schoolmaster, William Elliott, whose influence powerfully moulded him and who remained his friend through life.³¹ At Jerilderie the boy learned to ride, and the delight of nearly every day was a brisk canter in the cool of evening, he on his small bay mare beside his mother on her big chestnut. Horse and bullock teams brought the merchandise to Jerilderie in those days, and

²⁷ Louis Monash was born at Krotoschin, Poland, in 1831, and came to Australia in the ship *Julius Caesar*.

²⁸ The firm was Martin & Monash, 19 Little Collins Street.

²⁹ In April, 1871, he and his fond teacher proudly produced a "piece" as a surprise on his father's birthday.

³⁰ For most of the details here given of his life in Australia the writer is indebted to an admirable monograph written by his son-in-law, Dr. Gershon Bennett, and read before the Victorian Jewish Graduates and Undergraduates' Association as the first Monash Oration. Miss Mathilde Monash also assisted with many interesting reminiscences.

³¹ He taught John Monash much that was outside the school routine, including some higher mathematics. Later Elliott became the proprietor of a newspaper in Jerilderie. He became well known in Australia for his unwilling part in the raid of the Kelly gang of bushrangers on Jerilderie in Feb. 1879, during which they also visited Louis Monash's store. Louis Monash afterwards moved to Narrandera, visiting his family at intervals until 1883, when he returned to Melbourne, where he died in 1894. Besides John he had two children—Mathilde (born at Church Street, Richmond, in 1869), and Louise (born at Clifton Street, Richmond, in 1873). Louise married a distinguished scientist, Walter Rosenhain, who did important work in England during the war.

kangaroos thronged the bush, of which the boy learned something on long rambles with other boys. At ten he was set to teach the more backward children at school. He was also an able organiser of pranks with his sister as an enthusiastic assistant.

After three years at Jerilderie Mrs. Monash brought back her children to Melbourne³² for their education, a course urged by Mr. Elliott. Thus at twelve John entered Scotch College,³³ one of the most famous of Australian public schools. Games were not then the fetish that they became a few years later. Monash was not good at them and had no conception of their tradition; in 1918, arguing that credit for Australian victories was being withheld, he said that Australians were

by nature and instinct sportsmen, and that they would refuse to go on playing any game in which their scores were not put up on the scoring-board³⁴

and he was so pleased with this illustration that he frequently repeated it. As a boy he with some companions attended evening classes in gymnastics away from school, but his main physical recreation, especially in after life, was walking, often in mountainous parts of the bush. Most of his spare time was given to other interests. Nearly every year that he spent at Scotch College he won an English Essay Prize³⁵ and at fourteen he matriculated for the University of Melbourne, although he remained at school for another two years. Finally, in 1881, he dropped the classics but was "dux" (head boy) in mathematics and modern languages, and "equal-dux" of the school. The dux in 1880 had been James Whiteside M'Cay. Monash also won an exhibition in mathematics, of the value of £25.

With this slender provision for both fees and books he entered Melbourne University. There now opened for him a field of marvel and delight in which for two years his omnivorous mind roamed at will, taking in little that would help him to answer likely examination questions but vast quantities of the

³² Then and throughout John's school and early university days they lived at Clifton Street, Richmond, but later moved to St. James's Park, Hawthorn.

³³ Then at East Melbourne.

³⁴ *War Letters of General Monash*, p. 268.

³⁵ His most notable essay is said to have been one on Macbeth, founded on a German criticism.



II. LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR JOHN MONASH, COMMANDER OF THE AUSTRALIAN
CORPS FROM 31ST MAY, 1918 UNTIL AFTER THE ARMISTICE

*Photo. by Elliott & Fry, London.
Aust. War Memorial Collection, No. H17,424.*

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12. THE COUNTRY AROUND MORLANCOURT

View into Morlancourt pan photographed by No. 3 Squadron A.F.C. on 22nd July, 1918 from the southwest above the farthest point taken by Australians. The view shows the nature of the country, sunken roads, banks, etc. (The hills are steeper than are indicated in the photograph.)

To face p. 201.

amazingly deep and general knowledge that afterwards stored that immense repository, giving him interests in—and some degree of power over—most men and things that he met, enabling him to pass a valuable judgment upon almost any problem that life presented to him. He often afterwards complained that the university lecturers of his day, instead of providing the food for which his young mind was hungry, appeared to direct their efforts to hammering points taken from a stereotyped syllabus into the heads of the duller pupils. Consequently he “cut” most lectures, where attendance was not then compulsory, but spent eager days digging into every department of knowledge that interested him—digging, consequently, in almost every direction. The part of his exhibition not required for his university fees he expended on books. The day after receiving the money he bought the *Electra* of Sophocles, a Latin-English dictionary, two volumes of Carlyle, Adam Smith’s essays, and a volume of de Quincey; and soon after this Hume’s *Essays*, Tom Hood’s poems, Gibbon’s *Life and Letters* with the *History of the Crusades*, Sale’s *Translation of the Koran*, the works of Shelley and Coleridge, Josephus’ *Wars of the Jews*, Pepys’ *Diary*, and 2s. 10d. worth of penny biographies of famous men. These were only the beginnings of his own library—most of his reading was done either in the Melbourne Public Library or that of the University.

Reading was only one method in his impetuous onslaught upon the whole domain of knowledge. He attended the law courts to hear legal argument and Parliament to drink in debates; he was prominent in debating societies, and took regular lessons in painting. He wrote essays, and, for the newspapers, articles and letters. He practised carpentry as a hobby and had a passion for music. His diary gives some vivid glimpses of his mental ranging during this phase.

14th July 1882. In the evening went to Debating Society and heard an essay by Mr. Beaver on Australian Exploration, the greater part of which I recognised as copied, word for word, from Sutherland’s history.

18th July 1882. Although I went early to the University I only attended the Science lecture. The remaining time I spent reading Macaulay’s *Life, Letters, and Diary* by his nephew. It probably will have the effect of altering the style of my diary.

11th August 1882. Went this morning to the Supreme Court and

heard two splendid speeches by Purves and Madden each occupying one and a half hours. . . . Took six closely written pages of extracts from Sale's *Preliminary Discourse on the Koran*. Will read the Koran after the fashion of the old priests—by sections, at least a section a day.

At the end of his first year of the "Arts" course came the examinations and catastrophe.

25th November 1882. It is all over at last. I went to the University in the morning to inquire about results, receiving condolences from everywhere. . . . When the result became known at home there was great mourning, and I soon felt fit to drown myself.

He managed, however, to pass with ease the supplementary examination soon afterwards, and in his second year, though his raids upon all branches of knowledge resembled those of the first, he paid more attention to lectures, and did well academically.

But at this stage, when he was eighteen, lack of funds began to hamper his studies and he had to take pupils in order to remain at the University. At this time also he became intensely interested in engineering construction and walked all over Melbourne to watch buildings being erected or dredges operating. At the same time, apart from athletics, he lived a full university life. He played chess—on active service a generation later he carried a small chessboard in his kit—and he was elected to the Committee of Students of the University. But possibly it was his reading of war history—or conceivably a lecture by Archibald Forbes to which he listened in July, 1882—that caused him in 1884 to enter the original company of the University Rifles of the Victoria militia, in which he rose to be a colour-sergeant.

In 1884, having to suspend his course at the University in order to work for his living, he secured a position on the works then beginning for Princes Bridge. He was helped by having had at the University some tuition in surveying, and within two years he was given charge of the earthworks on both banks of the Yarra and of all the masonry. In 1886 David Munro & Coy, for whom he was working, employed him on other bridge works. In 1887 came another milestone in his life. The University Militia Company being disbanded in consequence of the irregular attendances of students, John

Monash at once applied for a commission in the garrison artillery. His diary of March 6th says:

The undercurrent of my thoughts has been running strongly on military matters. Yesterday things came to a finality. I have been attached to Major Goldstein's battery. . . . A combination of military and engineering professions is a possibility that is before me.

In 1891 he took his degree of B.C.E. In addition, finding that knowledge of law would be invaluable in his work as an engineer, he decided to qualify in that subject and by 1895 he had taken his B.A. and LL.B. In spite of his impetuous bursts into every field of knowledge, it must not be imagined that he was an unmethodical browser. In later years he mapped every day to a time-table, allowing, like a good soldier, ten spare minutes between each of the main occupations in order that he might make up leeway or, if he were up to time, might relax. He indexed and filed every letter, and catalogued and cross-catalogued his books. Among his private papers is a small card, neatly made out in his strong handwriting when he was leaving corps headquarters in France for his London leave. It shows the precise contents not only of every package that he took with him, but of every pocket. And in his university years, as throughout his life, his day began at 6.30 a.m. and often finished at 1.30 next morning.

But never, probably, were his vast powers of thought and action more keenly employed than during the years in which he had to build up his professional position. In 1893, when he was assistant engineer and chief draughtsman to the Melbourne Harbour Trust and had further qualified for municipal engineer, engineer for water supply, and patent attorney, the Australian land boom burst, and next year the Trust had to reduce its staff. He was now 28, married, and unemployed, but he faced the depression by launching into practice as consulting engineer and patent attorney. There is no space here to tell how work began to come in to him, especially from the other States; he was called in to advise on the Bundaberg-Gladstone railway in Queensland, the Mullewa-Cue railway in Western Australia, the Kelly Basin-Gormanston line in Tasmania. The King River bridge on the Burnie-Zeehan line was built to his design. He was constantly called in as an expert

witness in lawsuits, including that concerning the riparian rights of the great McCaughey estate in Riverina. From 1896 onwards he made a specialty of construction in reinforced concrete³⁶ and quickly built up a great practice in this branch of engineering. In 1912 he was elected President of the Victorian Institute of Engineers and Member of the Council of the University of Melbourne.

Meanwhile his work in the militia had continued. He rose to major in the artillery in 1897; lieutenant-colonel in the intelligence corps—in which he served immediately under his old schoolfellow, Col. J. W. M'Cay—in 1908; and finally colonel commanding the 13th Infantry Brigade of the Citizen Forces in 1913. It was in this capacity that he addressed his commanders at the end of the field day of which Sir Ian Hamilton, then inspecting the Australian defences, wrote in *Gallipoli Diary*:

I have a clear memory of him standing under a gum-tree at Lilydale, near Melbourne, holding a conference after the manoeuvre, when it had been even hotter than it is here now. I was prepared for intelligent criticisms but I thought they would be so wrapped up in the cotton wool of politeness that no one would be very much impressed. On the contrary, he stated his opinions in the most direct, blunt telling way. The fact was noted in my report.

At the outbreak of the Great War he succeeded Col. M'Cay as chief censor, and as such had the unpleasant duty of arranging for the internment of some of the German scientists who had arrived for the session of the British Association for the Advancement of Science—colleagues whom, as a leader in one branch of science and an expert in many, he had been anxious to welcome. Within a month of this appointment he was offered the command of the 4th Infantry Brigade of the A.I.F., which—again on the heels of M'Cay, who had been given the 2nd Brigade—he accepted.

The chief incidents of his career in the A.I.F. from that time until the day, less than four years later, when he took over at Bertangles the highest fighting command in the A.I.F., have been told in this history. Only the threads of that story need here be gathered. He was not helped, as were the com-

³⁶ In this year he designed the bridge over the Yarra at Anderson Street.

manders of the first three brigades, by having a professional officer for his brigade-major, and the training of the second contingent, with which he sailed, was necessarily more hurried than that of the first. Yet both were plunged into the Gallipoli Landing on the same day, and for over a month the 4th Brigade held the most difficult sector at Anzac. It was averred against Monash in those days that he was seldom seen in the front line, the complaints from Quinn's Post, where the problems were toughest and the danger greatest, being sometimes bitter. It was further stated that the disastrous attack by his brigade on May 2nd at Baby 700 had left him unstrung, as well it might, and at higher headquarters doubts were expressed as to how he would "stand up to" heavy strokes of adverse fortune. When Monash found he could not push on his exhausted troops after the first night's fighting in the Battle of Sari Bair, he said in distress to Maj. Allanson of the 6th Gurkhas, "I thought I could command men!" Yet some hours earlier in that night's march, when the unfortunate delay in Taylor's Gap occurred, he had grasped the situation firmly enough, going to the head of the column which had met some opposition, taking control of the guides, and setting it in motion again.

Undoubtedly there had been defects in his leadership in lower command, but they had largely been compensated for by the great care and capacity with which his arrangements were made, and at times his brilliance flashed through, astonishing those who observed it. An acquaintance who visited him during the afternoon before that same advance, in order to learn one or two useful points in the programme, has confessed to becoming almost spellbound as, in twenty minutes of transparently lucid exposition, the whole intricate scheme of operations was unfolded to him. Like some hundreds of others, who afterwards had a similar experience, he instantly recognised that he was listening to a master of clear thinking. The British commander of the 4th Division, Sir H. V. Cox—the same against whose appointment Monash had thought of protesting—afterwards told a friend that he made a point of being present, when possible, at Monash's conferences with his battalion commanders for the sheer pleasure and edification of hearing his expositions. As was said in the volume of this work dealing with the later events in Gallipoli, it was then

already predicted of him that he "would command a division better than a brigade, and a corps better than a division."⁸⁷ In July, 1916, when giving him command of the still untrained and unassembled 3rd Division, Birdwood recognised his peculiar capacity for organising and training; the one doubt concerned his bodily fitness to endure heavy strain. But by a self-imposed regime of abstinence and ample exercise, Monash avoided the danger of corpulency and, after the six months on Salisbury Plain, returned to France not only fitter in body but refreshed in mind.

The moulding of that magnificent division should have freed Monash from any doubt as to whether he could handle men: his untiring care, ensuring that much of the troops' leisure was healthily and pleasantly planned for, resulted in his taming the 3rd Division so far as an Australian force could be tamed and retain its full fighting value. The head of the Australian military police in France, Lieut.-Col. W. Smith, noted an extraordinary difference between the amount of military crime in this and the other Australian divisions. Yet Monash's attempt to increase *esprit de corps* by openly distinguishing his division from the other four failed, being based on a misconception of the outlook of the men whose pride was rather in being included with the others.⁸⁸ Monash's leadership as divisional commander was still hampered by an insufficient experience of the firing line, which made it difficult for him at all times to judge what was likely to be true or false in the reports of events there. He was inclined to believe the best story⁸⁹—a tendency always dangerous in a commander. The war correspondents noted that he was always the best leader from whom to seek information before a fight but the worst to go to afterwards—he tended to think that everything had happened in accordance with plan, and closer inquiry usually

⁸⁷ Vol. II, p. 588.

⁸⁸ A symbol of his policy was the direction alluded to in Vol. V (p. 13), that the men of the 3rd Div. should wear their hat-brims turned down. Monash also ordered all members of his headquarters to wear on their arms the 3rd Div. H.Q. colour patch. The medical officers, however, were only attached, and should have been wearing the chocolate arm-patch of their branch of the service. Surg.-Gen. Howse, seeing in the order a challenge to his control—a point of principle which he held to be vital—insisted on Monash's countermanding the order, and obtained Birdwood's ruling. Monash urged all conceivable arguments, and finally made a personal appeal to Howse not to shake his prestige in the division; but, upon the failure of this plea, he accepted with a good grace.

⁸⁹ The instance most widely noted was when in his report of the 14th Bn.'s raid of 2-3 July, 1916, he included the story about the wounded throwing themselves on to the wire-entanglement to form a bridge for others to pass over.

proved that, even in the best planned battles, it had not. Moreover the fact that in dealing with his commanders he did not insist on the standard of front-line supervision that was customary in the A.I.F. resulted in at least one important subordinate leaving this duty to juniors. Monash could not always distinguish between genuine fighting leaders and some who made a better show on parade.

But these shortcomings had been less important in a divisional commander than in a brigadier, and, in contrast, his immense capacity for organisation had more scope. The first great battle of his division was Messines—a set-piece precisely suiting his genius—and he was determined to make a certainty of the division's success. He accordingly organised its performance with the minuteness usual in a company raid. Yet in this he was far from “doing the work of a corporal” by trying to impose detailed plans upon all sections of his troops. No leader was readier to ask the opinions of subordinates, and his plans were constantly dependent upon them. Indeed with all his genius for organisation he knew, and stated with regret, that he was not so strong in invention. But his immense capacity for work enabled him to consult each important junior, whether in the big conferences for which his regime was famous or individually, and to use his great intellect not only in evolving his own plan but in helping subordinates to make their plans in conformity with the greater scheme.

In intellectual development John Monash was as catholic as Napoleon; his mind knew no horizon except that of the universe, and every item of knowledge that it daily acquired was docketed for future use. Like that great prototype he ranged leagues beyond the intellectual confines of most soldiers. He could meet economists, artists, philosophers, educationists, lawyers, astronomers on their own ground, drawing them out with intelligent questions obviously based on knowledge, and by sympathetic listening extend the bounds of that knowledge still farther, and in such fields lay his delight. To military achievements, except as a means of renown and an instrument in saving the national or social order, he attached little importance.

I am very heartily sick of the whole war business (he wrote early in 1917).⁴⁰ Its horror, its ghastly inefficiency, its unspeakable cruelty

⁴⁰ Quoted from Memorial Oration by Dr. Gershon Bennett.

and misery have always appalled me, but there is nothing to do but to set one's teeth and stick it out as long as one can.

Napoleon also spoke like that⁴¹ and probably felt it—even at the height of his military glories he would rather have engaged his vast powers as a dictator of peaceful reconstruction. The intellect of John Monash, like his, was stored with knowledge sufficient for the greatest of rulers. Like Napoleon he could get full dramatic value out of a situation. Like him also he was loyal to his clan; at Australian Corps Headquarters his personal staff was Jewish, and men honoured him for this loyalty.

But, if the resemblance in mentality was striking, it ended there. The calculated audacity of the Corsican was replaced by prudence adhered to as a principle. Unlike Birdwood, Monash took no delight in running bodily risk. It was typical that, whereas Birdwood, being on leave in England when the Germans attacked in April, 1918, seized the chance of crossing the Channel by an air force machine in order to reach the front in a few hours, Monash four months later, in the climax of his life, when informed that he might at any moment be required in France to play his part in the Allies' great offensive, arranged for a destroyer to stand by at Dover, "as I was not quite prepared for the alternative proposition of flying across."⁴² There was never any sign that he lacked physical courage; rather he was determined to avoid all except inevitable risks, whereas Birdwood, with his eye on the effect among his men, was resolved to share some of their dangers. Thus Birdwood kept his headquarters in Hazebrouck when the house next door was shattered by the searching fire of a monster gun, but Monash withdrew his from Bailleul and, later, from Franvillers as soon as those towns were uncomfortably shelled.

There was much less of the gambler in John Monash than in Napoleon, and much more of the genuine artist. Possibly the musician's sense of symphonic composition helped him in his operations of war. But, vividly illuminating as is his conception of a battle-plan as an orchestral score, each group of instruments coming in at the precise moment to play its part

⁴¹ Compare his statement to Josephine: "Do you think I enjoy it? You know I can do other things than waging war, but I am the bond slave of necessity."

⁴² *War Letters*, p. 253.

in the concert of sound,⁴³ this relates only to the actual development of his set-piece battles and gives no notion of the vast care of preparation in getting men and material to the right place in the right time to play their parts. It was as engineer rather than artist that he consciously built these great static battle-plans, using the same care and, on the administrative side, largely the same methods with which he would design and organise the construction of a bridge. His last great fight at the Hindenburg Line he described—before the battle and after—as “simply a problem of engineering,” and some years later, when seeking the degree of Doctor of Engineering of Melbourne University, he submitted his book, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918*, as a thesis on the application of the principles of engineering to the conduct of war. He cared for his men just as he would for his workers—their welfare was a necessary condition of their efficiency, and although, tested by the casualty lists, he was not more economic of them in battle or raids than other commanders—indeed the losses of his brigade, division, and corps were, if anything higher than the average in the A.I.F.—the expenditure of their lives was never due to lack of care in thinking out and preparing operations. As every effective soldier must be, he could be ruthless where results required it—to fail in this would be merely to run the risk of failure in the use of this barbarous method. In the conduct of war generosity and humanity—or the appearance of them—are essential only in two respects: the lack of them in dealings with one’s own side destroys morale, and in dealings with the enemy may render unattainable the peace for which the war is waged. Monash was eager for military glory; but of none of his battles can it be said that he embarked upon it for that reason. He was naturally humane. But his love of his well kept garden (of which he often spoke during the war), and of walking in the bush; and of the piano, which he played beautifully; and, in later life, his devotion to his grandchildren, whom he taught to read after himself especially studying phonetics and the teaching of young children⁴⁴—all these attributes are irrelevant to his attitude towards war, which was

⁴³ See *Australian Victories in France in 1918*, p. 56.

⁴⁴ Dr. Gershon Bennett says that he taught them daily from 9 till 9.15 a.m., so that they could read at 5 years of age. Every night that he spent at home he read for an hour and a half to his daughter and son-in-law.

entirely that of a realist. Probably his heart affected little his dealing either with the enemy or with his own troops; but in every dimension the range of his thought and the insistence of his care were greater than those of any other leader in the A.I.F. "His was the most highly trained mind that I had to deal with in the war," writes General Blamey, the chief of his staff.

But it was typical of his mind that as soon as construction was finished his care ended. For all his earlier devotion to history and literature, when his military achievements were passed and it came to writing of them, he was incredibly careless; like a painter, he splashed his canvas with a large brush in order to produce a desired impression, with the result that his writings are full of errors in detail, not always unimportant. Probably this work also interested him only so far as it was also, in a sense, constructive—a means of obtaining wide recognition of the part played by himself and his troops; and, like all his other works, it was on the whole well designed for its purpose.⁴⁵

From the first day of his command at Corps Headquarters his relations with his staff were admirable. With his extraordinary knowledge of most of its departments he combined great driving power and a most considerate mind. In the last six months Birdwood had made the headquarters almost completely Australian—only two of its leading figures, Brig.-Genls. Carruthers (D.A. and Q.M.G.) and Fraser⁴⁶ (B.G.H.A.) were British. Most Australians probably expected that Monash would have them replaced by Australians, but he retained both to the end. In the case of Fraser this may have been due to the fact that the whole of the heavy artillery of the corps was British.⁴⁷ In the case of Carruthers a junior, Lieut.-Col. Somerville,⁴⁸ an officer of the permanent Australian service, was recognised as an organiser of outstanding capacity, and Carruthers deliberately allowed him to play a leading part in

⁴⁵ Even his *War Letters*, though in a different category, are not wholly accurate.

⁴⁶ Br.-Gen. L. D. Fraser, C.B., C.M.G.; Royal Arty. B.G.H.A., Aust. Corps, 1916-18. Of London; b. 15 Apr. 1868. Died 4 Feb. 1926.

⁴⁷ The two Australian siege batteries were then still with Second Army, where they supported the French D.A.N. at Kemmel and the Scherpenberg.

⁴⁸ Col. G. C. Somerville, C.M.G., D.S.O., p.s.c. D.A.A. & Q.M.G., 1st Aust. Div., 1915-16; A.A. & Q.M.G., 2nd Div., 1916-17; A.Q.M.G., Aust. Corps, 1917-18; Metropolitan Area Comdt., Sydney, since 1940. Of Sydney; b. Goulburn, N.S.W., 13 July 1878. (As Secretary of the Royal Agricultural Society of N. S. Wales since 1924, he is the organiser of the annual Royal Show in Sydney.)

the administration. Monash, apprehending that, if he dispensed with Carruthers, Somerville's activity might be restricted, retained the existing arrangement. The heads of other main departments of the staff—Brig.-Genls. Blamey (B.G.G.S.), Coxen (B.G.R.A.), Foott (Chief Engineer), all regulars, and Col. Barber (D.D.M.S.), a civilian—were men of unusual capacity.

Of course he (Monash) was lucky (wrote Col. Barber long afterwards) in that the corps was turned over to him as a perfect fighting machine. There was a wonderful spirit of cheerfulness and optimism in the corps when all the troops around us were in the depths of gloom, and we never looked back from this time onward.

He made the Australian Corps (says Gen. Rosenthal, commander of the 2nd Division) a team of willing workers.

The change in the character of the higher leadership of the Australian Corps at this time had important results upon its history. The combination of Generals Birdwood and White had united a rare natural leader—interested in men but not in organisation—with an assistant of undoubted brilliance in his profession and of definite genius for organisation. Both had been men of outstanding integrity—indeed of nobility—personal charm, and a high degree of moral courage. From the time of Monash's advent the corps had at its head a very great mind—certainly one of the greatest that has ever controlled a British military force—with an assistant whose capacity challenged comparison with White's. Both commander and staff officer were now organisers of first rate ability. In the control of his staff Monash's principles were—that by conference and continuous consultation it should resist the inevitable tendency to work in watertight compartments, and that it should always regard itself as the servant of its troops. Further, he wrote to a friend,⁴⁹

it did not take me long to learn that the only ways to carry out the responsibilities of command were, firstly, to erect optimism into a creed for myself and for all my brigades, arms, and depots, and secondly, to try and deal with every task and every situation on the basis of simple business propositions, differing in no way from the problems of civil life except that they are governed by a special technique. The main thing is always to have a plan. . . .

⁴⁹ Dr. Meyer. (*See War Letters*, p. 232.)

The still unsettled questions involved in Birdwood's "temporary" appointment may here be briefly followed to their end. On reaching England early in June Mr. Hughes became convinced that there were grounds for objection to the continued tenure of the administrative command by Birdwood if his appointment to the Fifth Army were made permanent. The alternative so much feared—that M'Cay might be appointed to succeed him—was in no danger of being adopted; Hughes quickly formed the opinion that White and Monash were best suited for the two leading positions. By that time Monash was well seated and thoroughly successful in the corps command; and, although the attractiveness of the administrative command was purposely increased by the prospect of possible advancement to the rank of general, Monash had no intention of leaving—at least for the present—the command in the field which, even with lower rank, would still be much the more important in the public estimation. He wrote asking Mr. Hughes "upon every ground and in the best interests of the A.I.F." to retain the present system of administration, "which has worked so well and kept the A.I.F. so efficient, so contented, and so entirely free from intrigue." He asked the Prime Minister to visit the force in France when he would discover that the existing regime was almost universally supported by all senior officers qualified to express an opinion. Writing to his family a little later, he said: "My own personal view is that I cannot relinquish the corps command until I have made a proved success of it. . . . I propose therefore to . . . insist upon retaining the command of the corps. In this battle I possess, of course, very many and very strong cards and some of them are trump cards among which is my undoubted belief that both Rawlinson and the Chief (Haig) will see me through."

He never had to use them. In the first place General White, though he would have greatly preferred the corps command, resisted, as strongly as Monash, the alterations now suggested. In a letter he told Keith Murdoch that he would fight him to the end over the matter; and, when eventually sent for from London and consulted by Hughes as to the officers most suitable to command the corps, he answered: "First Monash, next

Hobbs." "And isn't there a man named White?" said the Prime Minister. With a smile White waved away the suggestion. He would have taken the position only if ordered to do so, and if Monash voluntarily left it. At the beginning of July Hughes visited the troops in France and, as Monash had requested, consulted the Australian divisional commanders and several other senior officers and found nearly all of them to be thoroughly satisfied with the existing arrangements; they were full of confidence in General Monash, and most of them supported his assurance to the Prime Minister that the retention of Birdwood as G.O.C., A.I.F., was in the best interests of the force.

Nevertheless Hughes was unshaken in the conviction that to administer the A.I.F. was a task for the full attention of a special commander. At this stage General Chauvel, in Palestine, being confidentially informed by Col. Dodds that an appointment was meditated, put in a claim for consideration if Birdwood gave up the command; but Hughes would have none but a leader experienced on the Western Front. Eventually, obtaining from the War Office notification that General Birdwood's command was made permanent, he decided to offer him the choice between keeping the administrative command of the A.I.F. or remaining with the Fifth Army. If, as Hughes expected, Birdwood decided to continue as army commander, the position of G.O.C., A.I.F.—possibly carrying the rank of full general—would probably be offered to Monash; if he refused it, to White. On August 12th Hughes wrote offering the full-time position to Birdwood. Birdwood consulted Haig, who expressed the opinion that he should accept, but, as the British Army was then engaged in a crucial offensive, should ask if the Australian Government could see its way to lend him to the British Army until November 30th. This apparently was done. It was not the result that Mr. Hughes or his advisers had wished or anticipated, but the existing arrangement was allowed to continue. By September difficulties had arisen and General Monash, feeling himself hampered by them in his conduct of fighting operations, was swinging to the conclusion that the administrative command should be transferred from Birdwood to himself, who would combine it with the active

command as for three years Birdwood had done. The Armistice found the temporary arrangement unchanged, but it was evident that the administrative command was now likely to increase in relative importance. At this stage Monash wrote:

The whole question of my future and my possible appointment as G.O.C., A.I.F. is still open. The events of the recent few weeks have rather delayed any further action by Hughes, but it is still quite on the cards that he may ask me to take up the supreme command of the A.I.F. so as to supervise demobilisation and repatriation. On the other hand . . . it is quite likely that General B. will be prepared to relinquish his army command and devote himself to the command of the higher administration of the A.I.F., that is, if Hughes can be got to agree to that course.

The Prime Minister's decision will be recorded in its place; it suffices here to note that from the end of May, 1918, so long as the five Australian infantry divisions continued to fight, Monash commanded the Australian Army Corps and Birdwood, with General White and Col. Dodds by his side, remained the administrative chief of the A.I.F. The attempt, based on various motives, to have this arrangement altered, had led only to a subconscious feeling of unsettlement at all the higher Australian headquarters. Fortunately the effects of this, as it turned out, were unimportant—there continued to be a marked happiness in the internal relations between the Australian staff and commanders under General Monash. The matter had really been decided by the appointments themselves before the effort to alter them was made. But, even to some of the civilians most deeply concerned, the result was strong proof that, in wartime administration as well as in tactics and strategy, when a decision is duly made it is better to let it be worked out than to risk confusion by immediately attempting to have it changed.

In England Maj.-General M'Cay continued to command the Australian depots at Salisbury Plain, and Brig.-Genl. Griffiths

The establishments in England —pattern of all that was best in the administrative service—the A.I.F. Headquarters at Horseferry Road. In August, to the regret of every one, partly in consequence of the uncertainty as to the future control of the A.I.F., Griffiths asked

to be allowed to return to Australia. He was persuaded to accept five months' leave, and his place was temporarily taken by Col. Dodds.⁵⁰ As the drafts from Australia dwindled and the combing-out of the training staffs to find officers and men for the front became increasingly necessary, M'Cay had reduced his training battalions from 15 in 1917 to 5⁵¹ by the beginning of May, 1918. On the 6th of April 1918—apart from soldiers in hospital but including men who had recovered after hospital and nearly 2,000 recruits on the way from Australia—the total infantry reinforcement in sight for the five Australian divisions in France was just over 7,000, and about as many more were training in Australia. By again combing out all N.C.O's who could be spared from the training staffs, and sending them to France together with 2,000 partly trained men and a few of the best conducted military prisoners, specially released, M'Cay had managed to furnish most of the drafts required after the German March offensive, and to avert the breaking up of more than three infantry battalions. The training staff now mainly consisted of officers and men from France in need of rest and specially sent to England on a short tour of duty. Of the hard worked staff of Brig.-Genl. Griffiths at Horseferry Road, 1,727 in all, less than 400 clerks were fit men, and, of these, 250 were specialists of the pay branch, who were not available. In June a reduction of the establishment of the battalions throughout the British Army from 966 men to 900⁵² furnished an additional 4,000 men; but it was certain that with heavy fighting a crisis in the matter of reinforcements for the A.I.F. would recur.

⁵⁰ Dodds was succeeded at Birdwood's headquarters in France by Lt.-Col. J. L. Whitham. Griffiths travelled to Australia with Surg.-Gen. Howse, D.M.S., A.I.F., who, partly with a view to insisting on the maintenance of high physical standards, partly for private reasons, had obtained similar leave.

⁵¹ Three of 3 companies, and two of 2 companies. The Australian system of training depots on Salisbury Plain has been described in *Vol. III* (pp. 161-72) and most admirably in *Vol. II* of the *Official History of the Australian Medical Services*.

⁵² This had been urged by Foch and had already been carried out in the French Army. German battalions were now established at 980 including 130 of the machine-gun company. In July they were reduced to 880 including machine-gun company. The reduction in British battalions did not apply to officers.

CHAPTER VII

THE THIRD STROKE AT MORLANCOURT

THE German offensive against the French on the Aisne had immediate results on the British front also. It was understood that the Germans had broken through by shattering, largely with trench-mortar bombardment, the trenches and garrisons within some 1,500 yards of the front line. South and east of the Oise this danger was met by a stricter application of Pétain's tactics of making his real defence farther back, and allowing the enemy to take the forward zone if he could overcome the slight forces there. But on the front north of the Oise the orders of Foch were that all ground must be held; "not an inch more is to be lost!" If the enemy did penetrate, the front line must be retaken by counter-attack made either at once with the local reserves or after careful preparation with the reserves of the higher commanders.

But, in case of a great attack, of what use would be any troops within the zone of trench-mortar bombardment? It would descend on them in a crash, without the weeks of preliminary shelling that had preluded the battles of 1917. British commanders expected the blow to fall upon them as soon as their reserves had been attracted to the French front, and to the more thoughtful, therefore, the problem set by Foch's order caused anxiety. On the Australian front it was one of the first that General Monash and the new chief of his staff grappled with.

On June 4th, when it was already foreseen that the next German thrust would be made near Montdidier, Brig.-Genl. Blamey issued a memorandum laying down measures by which troops for defence of the forward area might be kept alive during the expected bombardment "so that when the infantry attack commences the hostile infantry may be met on equal terms." Commanding officers, it was laid down, must keep their reserves safe. Troops not actually required in the firing

line must be either outside the possible zone of annihilating fire or in deep dugouts. All machine-guns within 1,500 yards of the line must be sheltered in dugouts¹ far enough back to enable them to be set up and manned before the enemy was on them. As for the artillery, which the enemy would try to smother in its known positions with gas shell even at 12,000 yards' range, each battery must select beforehand an alternative position—not necessarily one suitable for permanent occupation, but one in which it could fight the battle; and the guns must be ready to move thither at any moment. In addition there must always be a mobile artillery reserve. 'Gas drill must be perfected. In the forward zone, the infantry garrison must be distributed not in small posts of four or six men but in groups such as platoons with considerable powers of resistance.

These measures were discussed on June 6th at the first conference held by General Monash with his divisional commanders and the chiefs of their staffs—a meeting at which General Hobbs pointed out that, for the first time, all those present, generals and staff officers, were members of the A.I.F.

On the day of that conference—and three days before the Germans struck between Montdidier and Noyon—Sir Douglas Haig issued a memorandum on the same subject.² The garrison of the outpost trench-system, he said, was to be only strong enough to make the enemy believe that the battle would be fought there; the main battle system should be a mile behind it. If the line was penetrated commanders might withdraw any outposts that were still holding or else use small adjacent reserves to counter-attack and retake the position; such immediate attacks were favoured by Haig, but he insisted that, if larger reserves were thrown in, this must be done only after careful and thorough preparation.

These instructions did not conflict with those of Foch; they merely empowered commanders to give up temporarily the foremost parts of the outpost-system, or even, if hard pressed, to retire to the battle zone, but only with a view to retaking the outpost-line as soon as the reserves could be effectively used.

¹ Fourth Army H.Q. also had been urging the construction of many more dugouts.

² An amplification of his memorandum of 14 Dec. 1917, on defence.

But, for the troops themselves, whether in the front line or in rear, there was to be "only one degree of resistance, and that is to the last round and to the last man." In a second memorandum, issued five days later, Haig added that British troops when counter-attacking or in minor offensives must not expect to be covered by concentrations of artillery as dense as those of the 1917 battles; in present circumstances it was impossible to withdraw so much artillery from quieter sectors. In a most significant sentence, betraying a lesson finally imbibed (but at what cost?) he added, "a concentration of artillery tends to make surprise difficult and may thus wreck the enterprise." Infantry must learn to manoeuvre under cover of artillery fire, and to rely more than hitherto upon their own weapons for their protection. In order to accustom the British staffs to controlling such battles, he ordered that tactical exercises without troops must also be undertaken.

By this time the Germans had attacked at Noyon; and, as this was rightly assumed to be another formidable diversion, the early launching of Rupprecht's thirty-odd divisions to resume the principal struggle with the British appeared more likely than ever. Early in June a G.H.Q. order pointed out that along most of the British front the enemy's preparations were now so complete that it was difficult to tell where attacks would be delivered; the best way was to ensure the constant identification of the German troops on each sector. On June 8th G.H.Q. further warned all British armies that raids and minor offensives must probably be undertaken to assist the French by holding the enemy on the British front; and after the Noyon attack constant identification became even more urgent.

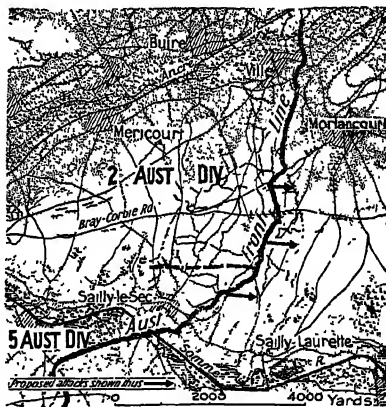
From the Australian fronts, both at Amiens and Hazebrouck, the stream of German prisoners was, it is true, almost continuous. Hardly a day passed without one or more of the posts or patrols making some capture. In the launching of minor offensives, also, the Australian Corps was easily the most active, and had already planned the next stroke in its series. A month earlier, when Rosenthal had made his first advance near Morlancourt, General White saw that the process could

**The next
minor
offensive**

not finish until the cross-spur above Saily-Laurette was wholly captured.³ And when, on May 22nd, Rosenthal became commander of the 2nd Australian Division, now in that sector, the rounding off of the earlier operation by an advance of its right brigade was an early matter for consideration. The attack was authorised before General Birdwood left.

By the capture of this crest the corps would gain good observation on both sides of the peninsula and the Germans would lose it; the depth of the defensive system would be increased; the Fourth Army would secure a position more favourable for any future advance beyond Morlancourt; another small blow would be dealt to the enemy, and a useful haul of prisoners would probably be made. The operation should not be costly—a vital consideration when reinforcements were so scarce. It would bring only one disadvantage—advancing the flank on the peninsula north of the Somme so far would expose it uncomfortably to the Germans at Hamel, south of the river.

Rosenthal, as was his habit, first assured himself of the precise situation by personally going round his front.⁴ The proposed objective, a line—partly of trench and partly of pot-holes—which he termed the German front line, lay just beyond the crest of the cross-spur, 600 yards from the 5th Brigade's outposts. This would be seized on a front of 3,000 yards. The attack would be made by the 7th (Outer States) Brigade, which was accordingly taken out of the line at Ville for a few days' rest. Since its most dreadful experiences in November, 1916, this brigade had been commanded by Brig.-Genl. Wisdom, a level-



³ Near the Brick Beacon Height (*see pp. 75-6*).

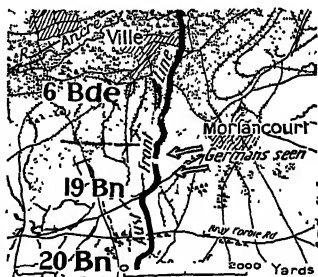
⁴ On May 24 and 26.

headed, cautious, experienced leader, Saxon in appearance and temperament.⁵ He tried to keep the project secret except from his staff⁶ and battalion commanders until he found that it was known "to everyone, including the troops in the front trenches." He then asked divisional headquarters to send him a message saying that the plan had been cancelled, and told his battalion commanders to spread this report.

The need for reasonable secrecy was proved on the night of June 4th, while the 5th Brigade was still holding the front from which the attack was to be made. The sector immediately north of the Bray-Corbie road, including the ground seized by the 18th Battalion during the Ville attack, was then held by the 19th Battalion. The night had been fine, dark, and quiet, when in the early hours a patrol of that battalion under Lieut. Hunter⁷ came in after examining

**German
attempts,
June 5**

the German wire-entanglements and reported that many Germans were moving in front,⁸ where the screen of the crops gave them the opportunity of assembling fairly close. Vickers and Lewis guns accordingly opened fire to harass the enemy, but at 2.45 the German artillery suddenly bombarded the front and support lines in the area captured by the 18th. The bombardment was fierce, with every kind of light and medium shell—5.9-inch, 4.2-inch, 77-mm., trench-mortar bombs, gas, phosphorus (smoke), and high-explosive; the Germans fired gas shells on the southern flank so that the northerly wind blew the fumes away from the area attacked, and smoke shells on the northern flank probably in the hope that the troops would mistake the smoke for gas and



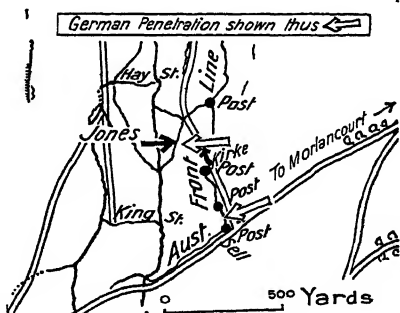
⁵ See Vol. III (pp. 928 et seq.) and Vol. IV (p. 189).

⁶ Maj. J. E. Lee (Narraport, Vic.) and Capt. C. H. Harrison (Dubbo, N.S.W.).

⁷ Lt. R. J. Hunter, 19th Bn. Linesman, P.M.G.'s Dept.; of Paddington, N.S.W.; b. Brewarrina, N.S.W., 11 May 1893. Died of wounds, 5 June 1918.

⁸ Hunter had with him 15 men. Some of the other troops when they saw the Germans mistook them for this and other patrols.

put on their masks. At 3 o'clock the curtain of fire shifted farther back and men in the four platoon posts holding this 600 yards of line saw Germans crossing No-Man's Land. The S.O.S. flares, calling for artillery fire, were immediately fired, and the two groups of the 2nd Division's artillery presently laid their barrage along its whole front.⁹ Out in No-Man's Land a private, H. T. Jelbart,¹⁰ who happened to be out patrolling with his Lewis gun team when the German barrage came down and had sheltered in a shell-hole, was now first to open fire on the advancing Germans throwing part of them into confusion. Other groups, however, pushed on and two large parties entered empty lengths of the first Australian trench between the posts. One group, some fifty strong, which got in north of the southernmost platoon, was at once cleared out by it, Lieut. Sell¹¹ with a lance-corporal (E. H. Buckley)¹² leading the bombers while a private (A. G. Weatherall)¹³ boldly climbed on the parapet and hosed the enemy with his gun at the hip. Another and much larger party crossed the trench between the two northern posts and made towards the support line. But in the post south of it Lieut. Kirke,¹⁴ leaving a Lewis gun with five men to guard his front, strung out the remaining fifteen to the flank and fired into the Germans as they pressed on towards the support line. There Lieut. Jones,¹⁵ assisted by Pte. Shannon,¹⁶



⁹ The left group soon ceased; the right group kept up its fire till 3.35.

¹⁰ Pte. H. T. Jelbart, M.M. (No. 5673; 19th Bn.). Farmer, of Trewilga, N.S.W.; b. Parkes, N.S.W., 19 Sep. 1897.

¹¹ Capt. C. L. Sell, M.C.; 19th Bn. Clerk; of Haberfield, N.S.W.; b. Picton, N.S.W., 28 Feb. 1888. Died of wounds, 7 Oct. 1918.

¹² L.-Cpl. E. H. Buckley, M.M. (No. 2133; 19th Bn.). Orchardist, of Oberon, N.S.W.; b. Oberon, 18 Feb. 1895.

¹³ Cpl. A. G. Weatherall, D.C.M. (No. 6432; 19th Bn.). Pharmaceutical student; of Bondi, N.S.W.; b. Bingara, N.S.W., 22 May 1897.

¹⁴ Lt. H. W. Kirke, M.C.; 19th Bn. Clerk; of Manly, N.S.W.; b. Armidale, N.S.W., 8 June 1894.

¹⁵ Maj. P. D. Jones, M.C., D.C.M.; 19th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Leichhardt, N.S.W.; b. Mortlake, Surrey, Eng., 29 Jan. 1893.

¹⁶ Cpl. H. S. Shannon, M.M. (No. 5628; 19th Bn.). Farmer; of Ardlethan, N.S.W.; b. Charlton, Vic., 2 May 1895. Killed in action, 31 Aug. 1918.

organised a dozen men—batmen, runners, and signallers—from company headquarters and led them straight out against the penetrating enemy. On their approach the Germans began to run. Kirke and his men charged from the flank. The front line was quickly cleared, many Germans being shot down as they ran. Sell had captured four prisoners and two machine-guns, Kirke and Jones four prisoners and another machine-gun, and a dozen other Germans were captured later.¹⁷ Australian stretcher-bearers, working under a white flag, picked up several of them wounded in front of the outposts.

The Germans secured no prisoner.¹⁸

The German raiders were assault troops of the 27th R.I.R., 54th Divn. The history of that regiment says that the attack, the code name for which was "Katzensprung" (Cat's-leap), was devised to give the impression that the Germans still threatened Amiens! The enterprise was controlled by the I Bn.'s staff, but the storm troops of all three battalions took part, advancing in seven parties on a front of 500 yards. The time for preparation had been short. The position of the Australian trenches "was little known." The ranges of the artillery were inaccurate and, on the left, the German barrage fell (as the Australians also noted) on the advancing parties. As a result of this Res.-Lt. Jordan, commanding on this flank, ordered his men to withdraw. He was never seen again. Even where the bombardment was better directed, it was limited by shortage of ammunition. Instead of shattering the Australian infantry it merely warned them of the attack, "so that the penetrating troops actually found the second trench evacuated." (Really they entered an unoccupied length of it.) The leader of No. 3 troop, a fine company sergeant-major, was mortally wounded in the first trench. Part of his troop, however, pushed on towards the second trench. According to this account a troop under Sgt. Böber met an Australian patrol in "vehement hand-to-hand fighting"; two of Böber's men were wounded, but he managed to "drag a struggling Australian" (evidently Corbett) with them. Under a burst of machine-gun fire the prisoner was lost—Böber reported him "killed by 'English' machine-gun fire." Papers were brought back from the trenches identifying the Australians; 20 Germans were missing.¹⁹

This attack convinced the Australians concerned that there

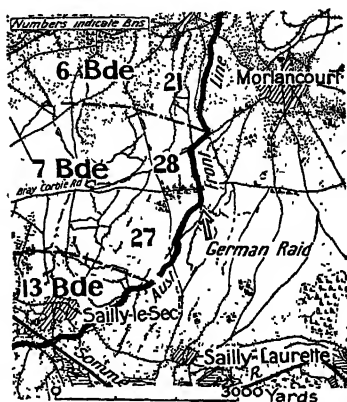
¹⁷ Five were taken by a Maltese Australian, Paolo Debono (Sydney) who, being sent up to the front line with a message, found himself confronted on arrival by half a dozen Germans. He bayoneted one and the others surrendered.

¹⁸ It was, however, only through the stubborn bravery of a New South Welshman that they missed one. At the beginning of the fight a stretcher-bearer, J. A. Corbett (a farmer and grazier of Barrington) was bandaging a wounded man in the front line when five Germans reached the place and seized him. He fought them, but was hit on the head, half-stunned, and taken towards the German lines. After going 100 yards he broke away from his captors, and though they fired after him he managed to reach the Australian lines, where he went on with his task of stretcher-bearing.

¹⁹ In addition the regiment in its four weeks' tour lost 82 killed and 300 wounded.

were important advantages in occupying continuous trenches rather than isolated posts. Not only did the trench render lateral communication possible, but the enemy found it difficult to know what parts of it were held and what were not. Both his bombardment and his infantry attack had largely been wasted upon empty lengths of the front.

On the following night (June 5th-6th), on which the 7th Brigade took over the front, another effort was made by the Germans—this time solely to secure prisoners. Shortly before midnight, when the 28th Battalion had settled down in the trench astride of the Bray-Corbie road, a party of Germans tried to enter this at the point where, in May, the 34th Battalion had blocked the old "pot-hole" trench. Coming from the continuation of the trench this party tried to get through the wire,²⁰ but both bombers and covering party were driven back by the fire of the Australian Lewis gunners, leaving a dead man of the 90th R.I.R. (54th Division).



The 7th Brigade took over precisely the front from which it was to attack.²¹ The two Newton mortar batteries²² of the 2nd Division, under a vigorous officer, Capt. Seymour,²³ were harassing the German front with their powerful bombs, shooting particularly well, maintaining a constant tension

²⁰ They were at first thought to be a patrol of the battalion which the 28th relieved (20th).

²¹ Slight adjustments were made on the flanks by which the 6th Bde. temporarily took over 700 yards on the left, while the 7th Bde. took a corresponding length from the 4th Div. north of Sully-Laurette.

²² These were the 3rd Aust. M.T.M. Bty. (Capt. B. H. Cairnes) and 4th (Capt. A. Bickers). (Cairnes, who died on 16 June 1930, belonged to Parramatta, N.S.W.; Bickers belonged to Rupanyup and Queenscliff, Vic.)

²³ Capt. L. Seymour, M.C. Div. Trench Mortar Officer, 2nd Aust. Div., 1918. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Bairnsdale, Vic.; b. Burnley, Vic., 31 July 1885. Died 30 Jan. 1936.

and incidentally cutting the wire-entanglements for the attack.²⁴

The attacking force would be only moderately strong, three battalions (some 1,500 men) advancing in three waves on a front of 3,000 yards. The German garrison, however, was probably thin, and by all accounts its morale was poor. But General Wisdom expected the ground to be strongly guarded by machine-guns, both scattered about the front area and firing from beyond the objective. As the crest was but slightly curved their field of fire would be perfect, and he accordingly asked that seven brigades of field artillery should cover the attack and that the neighbouring divisions also should lay down barrages on their fronts in order to mystify the enemy. The German trenches and posts had but thin wire defence and the Newton mortars and the 4.5-inch howitzers could be trusted to blow gaps in this during their intermittent shoots and in the few minutes' intense bombardment beginning at "zero" hour. Hoping to surprise the enemy Wisdom decided to attack at an hour never chosen by the Australians since the Pozières fighting in 1916—immediately before dark. There would be light enough for the troops to pick their way over the wire and the short, moonless night²⁵ would then screen them in their hazardous task of digging in beyond the crest, in the open fields. Before daylight the new defences and communication

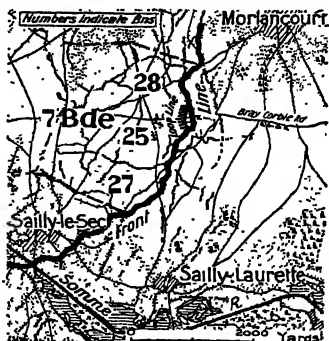
²⁴ On the afternoon of June 8, when one of Cairnes's mortars shelled for two hours the German trench and wire on the immediate right of the 22nd Bn. (who had relieved the 21st), Germans were seen retiring along the trench and others running back across the open. The German line was here a continuation of the 22nd's, and when, at 5 p.m., the shoot ceased, Lt. J. A. Lennon (Landsborough, Vic.) of that battalion, after arranging with the trench-mortar commander to fire another round, scrambled through the Australian wire, screened by the dust of the explosion, and with a sergeant, R. J. Tyler (Sale, Vic.), made his way along the German trench. At first shallow, partly filled with wire, and screened only by the crops, it became deeper, and the two Victorians passed a number of abandoned niches which they judged by the kit left there to be normally occupied by 36 men. Eventually they saw, and were seen by, Germans at a trench junction 450 yards from the Australian line. These Germans opened fire. Several machine-guns both in the line and farther back joined in. Lennon seized a German pack containing papers and with Tyler scrambled back through the wire into their own trench. The Germans were afterwards seen cautiously reoccupying their sap.

That night the same two Victorians led a party of fourteen men in a silent frontal raid through the high crop against the position which they had found to be garrisoned. When they were thirty yards away, however, a bursting flare showed them to the Germans. They rushed the post, and were returning with two prisoners when fire was opened on them from the flank. Tyler, who was bringing one prisoner, was killed and Lennon was mortally wounded. He was carried in by his batman, Pte. F. S. Stacey (Geelong, Vic.). Tyler's body was afterwards found, but not that of Pte. D. F. Bunworth (Byaduk, Vic.), who was killed at the same time.

²⁵ The moon would be new on June 8.

trenches to them must be finished—they would be unapproachable over the open after dawn.²⁶

But an attack at dusk involved one difficulty. The approach to the present front was so exposed to view that the troops would have to assemble in their trenches during the previous night and stay there, as best they could, hidden from the enemy during the whole day preceding the attack. General Wisdom believed that the fate of the attack depended on success in this, and much work was necessary in order to permit the assembly.²⁷ South of the Bray-Corbie road, where McMinn's company had gone through on the night of May 7th, the Germans and Australians were still in the same trench-line, and the German part could not be safely bombarded unless the Australians next to it were withdrawn. Here, therefore, there had to be dug, 150 yards in rear, a loop line



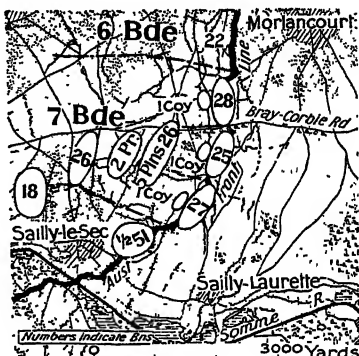
²⁶ Two strong points were to be dug by infantry and wired by engineers and two communication trenches cut by pioneers.

²⁷ The thoroughness of the planning is worthy of note. Three companies of each battalion would start in two lines from the front trench, and one company of each—to act as the second wave, carrying tools and supplies, and support the attack—from the support trench. In order to get quickly clear of the German barrage the second line of the first wave would follow only twenty-five yards behind the first. The pioneers would begin their advance as soon as the objective was known to be taken. Two Vickers machine-guns of the 7th Coy. would advance with the first wave of each battalion to positions chosen beforehand from which they would shoot into the gullies in front and on either flank—34 other guns of the 2nd M.G. Bn. would be massed in rear and fire over the heads of the troops, laying a barrage of bullets on the same gullies. At zero hour the 7th L.T.M. Bty. would shell for one minute at the highest rate of fire the German forward posts, and would then throw its fire, as long as the Stokes mortars could do so, ahead of the advancing infantry. Four of them would go forward to protect the troops digging in; and the rest stand ready to cover the advanced line. To help the companies to know when the objective was immediately ahead of them, one shell in every two of the barrage laid upon it by the field-guns would be a smoke shell.

Prior to the attack communication and assembly trenches had to be extended, deepened, and widened. As parts of the front trenches were now deep, stakes were to be driven into their walls to give the men a foothold in climbing out. Tracks to and from the front were to be thoroughly marked with tapes and sign-posts. Special flare signals were arranged by which the forward commanders of each battalion would indicate that its objective was taken, and others were to be fired when it had consolidated the position. So that the flares might be distinguished from those of the enemy they were to be fired towards the left rear and in particular groups and sequence. The 25th Bn. had to come in between the 27th and 28th on the night of June 7. The 26th Bn. spent each night in burying cables up to the old front line, the engineers and pioneers in tunnelling advanced headquarters and aid-posts.

500 yards long, into which the companies astride of the Bray-Corbie road could retire half an hour before the bombardment and from which they would launch their attack.

The night chosen for the attack was that of June 10th, and the three battalions were already holding their proper sectors on the 8th—27th (S. Aust.) on the right, 25th (Q'land) in centre, and 28th (W. Aust.) on left. Zero would be at 9.45,²⁸ when about a quarter of an hour of fading light would still remain. During the night of June 9th the companies for the attack were moved into their allotted parts of the front and support trenches, five platoons of the reserve battalion (26th, Q'land and Tas.) being brought up into the "old front line" of April; behind them the 2nd Pioneer Battalion settled itself in the old French line.²⁹ The new alternative trench across the Bray-Corbie road was completed only in the small hours of the 10th by large working parties of the forward battalions. It was only from two to three feet deep and could not be occupied till after dark.



The Diggers were extraordinarily keen. Knowledge of the coming operation had been widespread. A private of the 25th, employed as orderly at the baths in a back area, heard of it, "ran away" to the front, and went into action with his battalion. A corporal, detached at a school of instruction, "deserted" for the same purpose and to his disappointment arrived a day too late. A Queensland officer, in hospital recovering from a shell wound in the head, had news of it and, escaping from the base, "wangled" a flight to the front by aeroplane, only to find that he also was too late.

The troops who crowded the assembly trenches during this long day understood very well the plan of the operations. The

²⁸ "Summer" time—the true time was 8.45.

²⁹ Next came the 26th into close reserve, and the 18th (5th Bde.).

company commanders had studied the air-photographs of the position to be captured, and so had many of the patrol leaders who went out nightly with their men to investigate the German wire. Wisdom's order was that during daylight on the 10th the troops must take particular care to remain unseen. But the day was a glorious one and, as the men were bursting with high spirits, it required considerable self-restraint to carry out the order to lie low. As these youngsters coolly and grimly cleaned rifles and sharpened bayonets an onlooker could not help pitying the young Germans ahead of them.³⁰

Machine-guns, trench-mortars, and artillery³¹ also were in position, but in spite of all orders there was movement in the forward area. In mid-afternoon a German aeroplane flew over the Somme flats; at 7 p.m. another swept low over the crowded trenches on the ridge, and at 8.20 five more patrolled the German front. At 8.30 an intense bombardment suddenly descended, but chiefly around the supports and the 4th Medium Trench Mortar Battery.³² The shoot, however, ceased in ten minutes and few men were hit. At 9 o'clock, shortly after sunset, the companies of the 25th and 28th on either side of the Bray-Corbie road filed back into the new assembly trench, and at 9.45 the Australian barrage came down. The troops scrambled out and moved forward.

The sky was clear, the last belt of a beautiful sunset fading

³⁰ See *The Australians: Their Final Campaign, 1918*, by F. M. Cutlack, p. 204.

³¹ Before the operation the 2nd Aust. Div.'s artillery comprised: *Right Group*—96th (Army) Bde., R.F.A., and 3rd (Army) Bde., A.F.A.; *Left Group*—6th (Army) Bde. and 4th Bde., A.F.A.; *Superimposed Group*—5th Bde., A.F.A.; *Mobile Reserve Bde.*—5th (Army) Bde., R.H.A.

For this fight the mobile brigade and the 86th (Army) Bde., R.F.A., came up on June 9, and two army brigades lent by the 5th Aust. Div. (the 298th R.F.A. and 16th R.H.A.) got into position at Vaux and Mericourt early on June 10. The 2nd Div.'s left group—6th (Army) and 4th Bdes., A.F.A.—and the 47th Div.'s artillery made demonstrations north of the attack. The artillery of the 3rd and 5th Divs. made demonstrations south of it. The 298th, 86th 16th, 96th, 5th (R.H.A.), 3rd and 5th (A.F.A.) Bdes. provided the barrages for the 7th Bde.; and the 150th and 77th (Army) Bdes., R.F.A. (of the 5th Div.'s artillery, then with the 4th Div.) covered the 51st Bn.'s attack.

³² It was noted that a party of this battery brought up the rations by daylight. Despite the shelling the battery fired 170 rounds during the operation. The 3rd M.T.M. Bty., on the left flank, had bombarded the wire of the second German line north of the Bray-Corbie road during the afternoon with 112 rounds—at zero hour it fired 37 more. In the 4th Bty. Bdr. C. F. Clark and Cpl. G. T. McLennan, and in the 3rd Cpls. S. A. Price and P. C. Barber were conspicuous for their work both in carrying and in action. (Clark, who died on 3 Aug. 1937, belonged to Bonegilla, Vic.; McLennan to Avenel, Vic.; Price to Collingwood, Vic.; and Barber to Fitzroy, Vic.)

behind the attacking men. Ahead of them the shells burst for the most part very accurately as the three lines, with rifles held high across their chests, hurried through the tall green wheat crop and out on to a belt of grass to halt about seventy yards behind the curtain of shrapnel. In front of his company of the 28th immediately north of the road Capt. Meysey Hammond,³³ with his walking stick hooked on his left arm (which had been paralysed at Flers and was carried in a sling), walked, watch in hand, following the steps of the barrage, whose time-table he had learnt by heart. He knew that in this, the brigade's first big fight since Passchendaele, the eager Diggers incurred the danger of getting forward too quickly in the fading light and being shattered by their own shells. So he himself walked ahead, almost in the barrage, often with his back to the enemy, straightening out the line by an occasional motion of his stick, halting it whenever close enough to the shells by holding the stick above his head—whereupon the men lay down but he walked about until his watch told him it was time to wave them ahead again.

Wisdom's plans worked well; the hostile barrage fell very quickly but the hurrying lines, machine-gunners and all, got clear before the shells arrived. Almost from the start German machine-gun bullets swept the crop-land. Five or six machine-gun crews fought stubbornly, but most of the German infantry

³³ Capt. M. G. Hammond, M.C., M.M.; 28th Bn. Civil servant; of Perth and Broome, W. Aust.; b. Handsworth, Staffs., Eng., 3 July 1892. Died of wounds, 14 June 1918. This fine officer when a boy had run away from his cultured home in England and, after working happily as a farm and station hand in some of the roughest parts of Western Australia and serving before the mast in a Western Australian schooner, had found a job in the post office at Broome, the home of the pearling fleet on the north-west coast of Western Australia. When war broke out he enlisted as private in the 28th, and served in Gallipoli as sergeant. Though a cultured speaker and writer he loved the language of the sea and his men had grown accustomed to such orders on the march as "Make fast, A Company!" instead of "Halt!" It was with great difficulty that after the injury to his arm he obtained leave to return to active service. The Third Battle of Ypres was then raging, and all his fellow officers were against his going into it—he could with difficulty have adjusted his gas-mask. But after a stormy interview with his colonel he was allowed to accompany the first attack as intelligence officer—and, as such, went with the foremost troops to every objective. At this time the Aust. War Memorial collection of records and relics was being made, and he flung himself so keenly into the task of building up his battalion's records that his colonel seized the chance of having him transferred to the War Records Section in London. He took up the work with enthusiasm. At this stage H. S. Gullett, who had begun the collection of war records in Egypt and Palestine was appointed official war correspondent there. Hammond was about to be sent in his place when the German drive of 21 Mar. 1918 in France commenced. As letters arrived from his old comrades at the front, he grew increasingly restless and finally begged to be sent back. The request was granted. Lt. H. W. Dinning was sent to Egypt instead.

fled before the swift attack or remained cowering in the trenches. Some even came running towards the 28th with hands held high, to surrender.

On the front of the right battalion (27th, S. Aust.) there was a serious initial difficulty through a couple of the supporting guns catching the troops in the advanced part of their jumping-off trench³⁴—Lieut.-Col. Chalmers³⁵ states that 35 officers and men were hit by their own shrapnel; some batteries had had little time to range their guns. Yet in the main the front-line officers spoke of the barrage with enthusiasm. The infantry's one complaint was that its rate of advance—100 yards in two minutes³⁶—was too slow. Its density—a field-gun shell bursting three times a minute on each twenty-five yards or so of front—could not prevent all the opposing machine-guns from firing through or in it, and the troops waiting at each stage for the guns to lengthen range were under this fire. Yet a swifter advance of the barrage would have been dangerous. Had resistance been stiffer, the infantry would have been taxed to the utmost to fight down opposition quickly enough to keep up with the barrage; and to let the barrage get away from the infantry meant disaster.

In front of the 27th the Germans were holding, first, a few advanced posts in shell-holes, and behind this the now fairly continuous trench in which they had faced the 34th Battalion five weeks before. The 27th was not to end its advance there but to go 300 yards farther to the edge of the reverse slope, where the troops would cross a road and then dig in in the open. Here on the right flank, and here alone, some of the German riflemen fought stoutly—a fact which is illuminated by the history of the German unit concerned.

The advance came against the inner flanks of two German divisions—the 54th (which had relieved the tired 107th astride the Bray-Corbie road after the hammering near Ville) and the 24th (Saxon) Res. Divn., which since early May had been astride the Somme at Saily-Laurette and Hamel, having relieved the 18th and 1st Divns.

The continual disturbance of the front near Morlancourt had caused special steps to be taken there. "Towards the end of May," says a

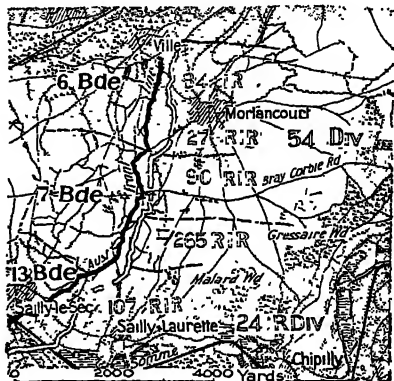
³⁴ Where in May the 5th Div.'s flank had thrust ahead of the 3rd Div.'s.

³⁵ Lt.-Col. F. R. Chalmers, C.M.G., D.S.O. Commanded 27th Bn., 1917-19. Civil servant; of Bagdad, Tas.; b. Hobart, 4 Jan. 1881.

³⁶ After a wait of four minutes on its starting line.

German history,³⁷ "the fighting activity of the enemy and other intelligence caused an attack to be apprehended, and the 223rd Divn. was stationed ready as counter-attack division behind the 24th Reserve"; in addition, a battalion of another division (the 108th, then near Villers-Bretonneux) was lent to the Saxons to maintain their northern flank on the cross-spur above Sailly-Laurette, south of the Bray-Corbie road—the sector attacked by the 25th Aust. Bn. and the left of the 27th.

When brought up on June 2 (says the historian of this battalion, the II/265th R.I.R.) the troops had wondered for what reason they were sent thither. "Either the trenches were not in order or something else." They then found that owing to the recent advance of the Australians there were no proper trenches—"that which bore the proud name



of 'main line of resistance' consisted of single rifle-pits connected by knee-deep bits of trench. . . . There was no wire." The battalion began to put up wire and connected the rifle-pits, though the connecting trench was still only shallow. The front of 1,000 metres was held by two companies, behind each of which, for immediate counter-attack if required, was placed an assault troop with a light machine-gun. The field of fire being short, two pickets, each with a machine-gun, were stationed fifty yards ahead, as well as listening posts. The Australian "patrols and trench-mortars" made it impossible to dig forward on the edge of the valley. The battalion commander, Capt. Rechtern, represented the position as dangerous, and his sector was accordingly narrowed to 800 metres. "Meanwhile the intention of the enemy to attack was increasingly apparent. Our airmen had located his jumping-off trench carried through to the upper edge of the slope, and from June 9, full preparations against attack were ordered." The main line and battalion headquarters in the gully behind it were bombarded with British gas shells "most of which, it is true, did not go off."

At dusk on June 10 the II/265th was about to be relieved by a battalion of the 107th (Saxon) R.I.R. when, at 9 p.m., headquarters warned the companies that German airmen reported the opposing trenches to be filling up with troops, and that the "highest degree of preparation" had therefore been ordered. According to Crown Prince Rupprecht the Australian assembly was "taken under annihilating artillery fire." A little later sudden artillery and trench-mortar fire combed the German position. In the sector of the southern company (7th) Res.-Lt. Gräber noticed that after the bombardment had lasted a few minutes the machine-gun fire accompanying it "suddenly ceased with one jerk." A flare went up. He instantly sprang out and saw the

³⁷ *History of 68th (Saxon) F.A.R., p. 165.*

opposing infantry "leap forward." The artillery barrage was still on his line, but he immediately alarmed his light machine-gun section. The first of its men came creeping because of the shrapnel, but at that moment the British artillery lengthened its range and the light machine-gun was forthwith set up and opened fire. The attacking infantry "threw itself back." The company sergeant-major had now come up, and Gräber, becoming free to attend to the flanks, observed that to the north the line of Australians was advancing quite unhindered. He guessed that the German infantry there were still crouching in their rifle-pits, hiding their heads from the bombardment, and had not detected the attack—a circumstance "which ought not to happen but constantly did." He accordingly told his section to "shoot steadily—nothing could then pass," and ran to find why a heavy machine-gun on his right was not firing. The Australians were advancing towards it in section rushes, but he reached it in time. "True enough there was no one to be seen. 'Get out, Tommy's here!' I yelled. They came at once out of their pot-holes, but mostly with their equipment unbuckled and in their field service caps. This machine-gun also was emplaced in a trice." For the moment the line of Australians had disappeared, but Gräber warned the gunners that it would be up again in a few seconds, and so it was, "at most sixty yards away, in a long line without a gap. The machine-gun opened and the whole line at once threw itself down."

Gräber next looked farther to the right "but had to give up the notion of alarming the other heavy machine-gun there as the enemy, at least as far as I could see to the right, had already advanced to immediately before our trench and I could not get there before him. From now on," concludes his account, "matters began to look ugly."

On the Australian side, by the time the German trench was here reached, one platoon of the 27th Battalion had lost its commander and every N.C.O. But a hard-fighting and hard-living veteran, Pte. Butler,³⁸ led the men bombing and shooting along 100 yards of trench and then organised the platoon in the new position, where for two days he continued to command it. Despite Gräber's bravery the 27th Battalion's objective, beyond the road, was reached practically to time-table. On its right two companies and a platoon of the 51st Battalion, 4th Division, swung forward that division's left immediately above Sailly-Laurette. The two platoons in the lead met no resistance, but captured a German officer, 18 men, and a light machine-gun.

This was at the extreme right of the 107th (Saxon) R.I.R., whose historian attributes the penetration to "the failure of several machine-guns."

The 7th Brigade's centre battalion, the 25th (Q'land), advancing on a front of 1,000 yards south of the Bray-Corbie

³⁸ Pte. R. W. Butler, D.C.M. (No. 257; 27th Bn.). Labourer; of Glanville, S. Aust.; b. Port Adelaide, 1895.

road, met the opposition of Gräber's company and of another north of it. Here the Germans were occupying part of the old "pot-hole" line and two lines of shell-holes and trenches still unconnected with their two new lines north of the Bray-Corbie road. Several machine-gun crews fired from the start and as one company of Queenslanders climbed out, Capt. Buttner,³⁹ all his subalterns, and several men were hit by a stream of bullets from somewhere in the crops ahead of them. The remaining officer, Lieut. Cromie,⁴⁰ a Victorian farmer, who had come to the infantry from the light horse and was older than most subalterns, was hit in the wrist as he led the company on; the stock of his rifle was splintered, and machine-gun bullets tore a side pocket from his tunic. He went on and, after jumping the barbed-wire entanglement, saw in the dusk by the light of bursting shells ten or twelve German riflemen standing together in a strong-point of the pot-hole line, with their bayonets on guard awaiting the charge. At that moment a shell of the barrage burst above Cromie, a fragment striking his shoulder and bowling him over. He sprang up again to find that the same shell had scattered the Germans, and he and the men with him continued their advance.

At this point he detected ahead, in an open strip between two wheatfields, two machine-guns—evidently those that had fired on the company earlier. He told his N.C.O.'s to hold the troops until the barrage, then falling about the Germans, lifted. At the moment the German machine-gunners were not active, and Cromie himself, half-hidden in the dust of the shellbursts, went on; threw the five bombs from his entrenching-tool sack at the two posts; and returning brought up his men practically without casualties across the main trench from which all but the dead and wounded had fled, and dug in well beyond it.

The northern company (8th) of the 265th R.I.R. was (says its historian) awaiting relief from the Saxon battalion, whose advanced party had already arrived at the main line, and the company commander there, Res.-Lt. K. Meyer, was going with the Saxon N.C.O. to see to the process, when the barrage fell about them. "Everything left and right was wrapped in black smoke." The S.O.S. signal was fired, but the supporting battery also was being relieved and no answer came.

³⁹ Col. A. R. W. Buttner, O.B.E.; 25th Bn. Officer of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Charters Towers, Q'land; b. Ravenswood Junction, Q'land, 4 Dec. 1881.

⁴⁰ Lt. G. L. Cromie, D.S.O.; 25th Bn. Farmer; of Rupanyup, Vic.; b. Rupanyup, 3 Sep. 1881.

A ration party had just arrived, including some men returning from leave; Meyer sent them towards the front line and they walked straight into the arms of advancing Australians.⁴¹ Meyer now used his assault troop to fire on the Australians, who could be seen advancing upon him "extended to about two paces. On our right," he says, "Tommy is already behind our main line of resistance. Of the troops with me—about seven including the Saxons—nearly all are soon wounded, and I too." He was captured. Lt. Weiss was taken prisoner by an Australian "storm troop" which had got beyond his trench and came at him from behind while his men were firing to the front. This opponent (could it be Cromie?) had broken through the right of the right flank company while the barrage was still on its position, and had bombed the trench and dugout and mortally wounded Lt. Meht, a fine young officer in charge of that flank.

One of the two sergeants who closely supported Cromie was mortally wounded; the company now mustered only thirty-six men, and they were well ahead of the troops on either flank. But Cromie stayed on for thirty hours with them until, his wound becoming dangerously septic, he was forced to have it attended to.⁴²

Immediately north of the Bray-Corbie road, Capt. Meysey Hammond of the 28th walked leading his men clear of, but very close to, the barrage. So they came over the grass on the bare hilltop on to a crop of clover, in which was some low trip-wire—the higher wire elsewhere had been well broken by the bombardment. At the last stage, when Hammond signalled, "Come on!" a German machine-gun opened fire and Lieut. Cobbold⁴³ and several men of his platoon were killed, as were many of the left of the 25th under Lieut. Bedsor.⁴⁴ The survivors crawled forward as opportunity arose and Corpl. Seymour⁴⁵ and Pte. Horton⁴⁶ from the flank soon rushed the position. The rest of Hammond's company had meanwhile charged, he being the first to reach the trench. He swung round his revolver in his uninjured hand and a number of Germans sur-

⁴¹ It is just possible that these men strayed and were those who ran forward to the 28th with their hands up.

⁴² Cromie had gone into the Australian barrage deliberately. But just south of the Bray-Corbie road twenty men were caught by it. Some shrapnel was probably falling short; but with men so eager such incidents were in any case inevitable.

⁴³ Lt. W. F. Cobbold, 28th Bn. Station manager; of Hughenden, Q'land; b. Chascomus, Argentine, 27 Apr. 1887. Killed in action, 10 June 1918.

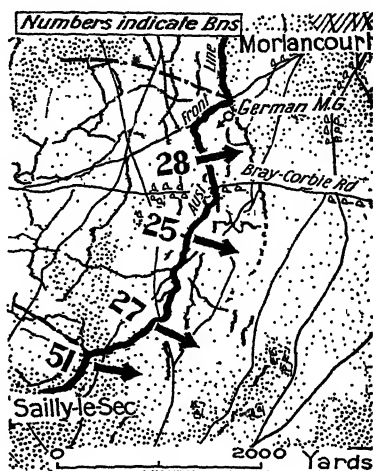
⁴⁴ Lt. G. Bedsor, 26th Bn. Ship's fireman; of Townsville, Q'land; b. Tinana, Q'land, 26 Dec. 1892.

⁴⁵ Sgt. H. L. Seymour, M.M. (No. 155; 28th Bn.). Labourer; of Katanning, W. Aust.; b. Smith's Mill, W. Aust., 19 Aug. 1896. Died, 1933.

⁴⁶ Pte. F. N. Horton, M.M. (No. 2510; 28th Bn.). Labourer; of Forest, Tas.; b. Circular Head, Tas., 17 Mar. 1896. Killed in action, 29 July 1918.

rendered; his men fired at others running off into the dusk. Hammond looked at his watch. "Two minutes late," he said.⁴⁷

On his left the centre company of the 28th under Lieut. Gaby⁴⁸ had less trouble than any other. Its signallers moving steadily behind Gaby, unrolling the reel of insulated wire, set up their telephone in the German front line and within twenty-five minutes of the start Gaby was telling Lieut.-Col. Currie that consolidation had begun.⁴⁹ In front of the left flank company (Capt. Dunkley)⁵⁰ the barrage was lighter and less regular, and German machine-gunners at the head of a communication trench opened fire. But they shot blindly in a fixed direction, with their heads below the parapet, and such tactics could not stop the advance. The gun was quickly taken; a bombing party led by a lance-corporal, R. C. Lindau,⁵¹ pushed on down this shallow sap but met a stronger party of the enemy and were bombed out again.



The advance of the 28th fell mainly upon the 90th R.I.R. (54th Divn.), but the Germans who here counter-attacked were part of the left flank company of the 1/27th R.I.R., the centre regiment of the 54th Divn. The German company sergeant-major brought up the "assault troop," which was then led in its attack by Under-Officer Drews.

A sergeant, T. H. Woolnough,⁵² at once organised a new

⁴⁷ The barrage lifted from the German line here at 9.58.

⁴⁸ Lt. A. E. Gaby, V.C.; 28th Bn. Farmer; of Scottsdale, Tas., and Katanning, W. Aust.; b. Springfield, Tas., 25 Jan. 1892. Killed in action, 11 Aug. 1918.

⁴⁹ The 28th had taken the precaution of extending the brigade's buried cable up to its advanced headquarters, and was able to speak from the front almost all night. This battalion's ground lines to the 25th and 27th also were most useful.

⁵⁰ Brig. I. E. Dunkley; 28th Bn. Tiler; of North Perth, W. Aust.; b. Moorabin, Vic., 6 Sep. 1886.

⁵¹ L.-Cpl. R. C. Lindau, D.C.M. (No. 4167; 28th Bn.). Sleeper hewer; of Greenbushes, W. Aust.; b. Foster, Vic., 28 June 1886.

⁵² Lt. T. H. Woolnough, M.M.; 28th Bn. House decorator; of Cottesloe, W. Aust.; b. West Ham, London, 27 Jan. 1891.

bombing party and, helped by a platoon lying in the open, drove the Germans some way back.⁵³

The brigade had gained its whole objective. From far back the green "success" flares were seen, all within a few minutes of time-table, and soon afterwards the red flares ("consolidation begun, covering parties out"). By 10.20 Meysey Hammond had written his report:

In face of intense machine-gun fire company gained objective in fine style.⁵⁴

The short night was now devoted to intense work of consolidation. The 27th Battalion placed its posts thirty yards beyond the road. Meysey Hammond found the 25th's flank sixty yards ahead of his own and advanced to it. The six forward machine-guns went precisely to their allotted positions,⁵⁵ two in the centre, two on each flank. The Stokes mortars took up their posts and carrying parties of the 26th Battalion brought them ample ammunition. The pioneers marched straight to the sites for digging two communication trenches. In the front line the 51st, 27th, and 25th dug a chain of strong-points and platoon posts, the 28th held and improved the German second line—a good trench, in parts six feet deep.

The crowd are in great spirits (Meysey Hammond had reported at 10.20) and just ready for any number of counter-attacks.

At 11.15 the protective barrage died down, and, after sharp German shelling close behind the front, the night became fairly quiet, as though the German artillery did not know where to fire.⁵⁶ At midnight on the left flank the quiet was broken by a party of Germans attempting to force their way past the barricade built by the Western Australians in one of the forward-leading saps. The Germans were beaten at the barricade,⁵⁷ their leader being

Counter-attacks

⁵³ He could not go so far as Lindau. Drews brought in a dead Australian there.

⁵⁴ His first estimate was that his company had taken 14 prisoners and 2 machine-guns. The number afterwards increased.

⁵⁵ These guns had started with the infantry so as to get clear of the German barrage, and then waited in shell-holes until the objective was taken.

⁵⁶ Apparently it was reported in the 90th R.I.R. that the Australians almost reached Malard Wood—a mile beyond the point actually attained.

⁵⁷ By a party under L.-Cpl. R. A. Davies (Guildford, W. Aust.).

shot, and retired down the sap. Consolidation went steadily forward. At 1.20 Meysey Hammond reported:

Relative quiet now exists on our front. . . . The enemy is evidently in position some 300 yards ahead. . . . Very few flares are being used by the enemy and there is a marked absence of machine-gun fire.

On the extreme right about midnight some Germans, thought to be a patrol, approached the outposts of the 51st and threw some bombs, but retired when fired upon. In front of the 28th in the dawn many parties could be seen moving; near the Bray-Corbie road they were 600 yards away, but to the north much closer. Looking through field-glasses Meysey Hammond judged by their full kit that they were about to attack. The artillery, being called by telephone, shelled the area with moderate intensity. The Australian machine-guns and Lewis guns were firing, and numbers of Germans broke away eastwards. But it was not until a prisoner, captured later, spoke of having taken part at dawn in the assembly for a considerable counter-attack, that the higher staffs realised that a serious effort had been made.⁵⁸

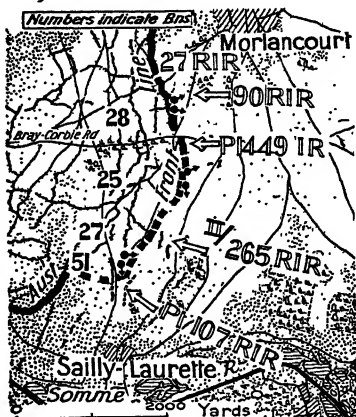
The history of the 265th R.I.R. gives an interesting account of that night's counter-attack, which actually had ended before the Australian infantry detected it. Just before the Australian attack Res.-Capt. Rechtern of the II/265th, at his headquarters in the gully behind the front line, was listening to an officer, back from leave, describing a gay evening at the Drachenfels, a famous resort overlooking the Rhine, when the Australian bombardment opened. Machine-gun fire could presently be heard, but soon the uproar gave way to dead silence. Then a helmetless, tousled machine-gunner reported that the English had broken into his company's trench. Sending a patrol to find the width of the breach, Rechtern himself took forward the two reserve companies that he could reach—one of the 265th and one of the Saxons. They were not to fire till fired on, and were to seize the old line in a surprise rush with bayonets.

Advancing about 11 p.m. into an area "still as death," Rechtern was suddenly met after 150 yards with heavy machine-gun fire from right and right rear. A flare went up from the Australians and showed a line of them just taking cover and others standing on the parapet as far as could be seen to the right. This was the first intimation to Rechtern that the attack extended beyond his own front. His signallers had been unrolling their telephone line behind him as he advanced, and he now

⁵⁸ The prisoner's statement led to an inference that the counter-attack was broken up by the indirect fire of the massed Australian machine-guns, shooting on their barrage lines. The machine-guns laid down barrages at 1.25 and from 2.30 to 3.30 on areas traversed by the German counter-attack troops—during the fight over 190,000 rounds were thus fired.

got through to the Saxon regimental headquarters, told them that the attack had broken through the left of the next division (54th) and asked for two Saxon companies to prolong his line in the counter-attack.

Meanwhile the left regiment of the 54th Divn., the 90th R.I.R., which had lost its whole front line, had sent forward its II Bn. In the centre, part of the 449th I.R. (233rd Divn.), reserved for counter-attack, was brought up together with some other advanced troops of its own division and of the 54th. According to the report of the German corps these went forward in the early morning. They were attacked by airmen with machine-guns and the attack stopped at 4 a.m. On the southern flank at 2.30 the Saxon batteries, some of which earlier in the night had been firing south of the Somme owing to the false alarm there, intensified their bombardment to cover the counter-attack; but before the troops were ready dawn broke and Australian machine-guns and snipers caught them digging in in the hard clay soil. While they tried to conceal themselves with rye and clover, Rechtern, lying on the slope, was informed through his telephone that a full dress counter-attack was planned for the evening of the 11th and his presence was required at a conference. He crawled to the rear to attend it.



The truth was that no counter-attack without the most careful and intense artillery preparation had the faintest chance of success. Consolidation was supervised personally by each Australian battalion commander himself visiting the front line. The carrying parties worked perfectly⁵⁹—hot coffee and rum were reaching the troops about midnight. Before day-break the forward troops had been thinned out, surplus companies

⁵⁹ That of the 28th, under Lt. E. Edmondson, was specially mentioned. One party of the 7th Field Coy., under Sgt. H. Hadley, which was to wire the 25th Bn.'s strong-point, arrived at a neighbouring front-line post. As the infantry commander could not be found and time was short, Hadley decided to erect the wire in front of the post reached by his party, and did so. The party under Lt. J. W. Mott, for wiring the 28th Bn.'s strong-point, duly carried out its task. The two engineer officers north and south of the road, Lts. Mott and T. A. Lawrie, after helping to site strong-points, reconnoitred and located the whole line of posts, and Maj. E. N. Webb later carried out a reconnaissance of the new front. (Edmondson, who was killed in action on 2 Sep. 1918, belonged to Perth and Boulder, W. Aust.; Hadley to Sydney; Mott to South Brisbane; Lawrie to Broken Hill, N.S.W.; Webb to Christchurch, N.Z.)

taking position in rear, and most of the wounded had been cleared.⁶⁰

We had a strongly consolidated position (wrote Wisdom afterwards) with two communication trenches, three strong-points, with garrisons disposed in depth, machine-guns and trench-mortars⁶¹ in position, and an effective S.O.S. (barrage) ready. There was nothing above ground to act as a target for snipers or machine-guns, and the troops were standing-to to meet any enemy counter-attack.

At 6 a.m. the contact airman of No. 3 Squadron A.F.C. dropped at advanced brigade headquarters a map showing the flares lit by the infantry at his call. They were along the objective whose capture had already been reported by telephone.⁶²

For some hours troops in the front line shot keenly at Germans in the crops ahead; the snipers of the 27th claimed to have shot forty. Machine-guns chased parties of Germans in Morlancourt and down the valley to Sailly-Laurette. The German batteries south of the river for their part quickly realized that they could harry the supports and headquarters behind the now far protruding Australian flank north of the river. German airmen mapped the new line and German field-guns, firing direct, blew out two posts. German machine-guns and snipers became active and Capt. Meysey Hammond, visiting his posts in the afternoon, was mortally wounded. "Keep the old flag flying, sir," he said to Col. Currie as he was carried past battalion headquarters.

⁶⁰ By the 6th Fld. Amb. (Lt.-Col. H. L. St. Vincent Welch), assisted by bearers of the 5th Fld. Amb. Ambulance cars and Ford vans picked up the wounded on the Bray-Corbie road at "Windy Corner" just behind the old French line. By 11 a.m. on June 11 nearly all wounded (except a few, difficult to find in the crops) had been cleared from the advanced dressing station at "Pearl Bay" near Heilly to the main dressing station (5th Fld. Amb.) near Querrieu and British casualty clearing stations at Vignacourt and Crouy. The stretcher-bearers on the Bray-Corbie crest were almost as exposed as at Bullecourt. Pte. G. L. Davidson has recorded an instance of a wounded man, safely brought to the R.A.P. by the regimental bearers but retained a little longer at the R.A.P., under a bank, because four bearers had just been wounded by a shell. He was presently sent off, but one of the bearers was at once killed by shrapnel. He was sent off again, but about half-way to Windy Corner another shell burst beside the stretcher wounding one bearer. The bearer, however, went on carrying until temporary shelter was reached. From there Davidson and another carried the wounded man for the rest of the journey. (Welch belonged to Double Bay, N.S.W.; Davidson to Fremantle, W. Aust.)

⁶¹ The four Stokes mortars that had gone forward under Lts. A. H. Stewart and M. J. Foster withdrew slightly, in accordance with orders, after consolidation was complete. They had 117 and 320 rounds at the gun positions respectively. In all, the Stokes mortars of the 7th Coy., under Capt. F. Brand, fired 500 rounds. The work of the guides for the carrying parties was particularly well done. (Stewart belonged to Plympton, S. Aust.; Foster to Perth and Fremantle, W. Aust.; Brand to Rockhampton, Q'land.)

⁶² British aeroplanes were in complete command for an hour or two at dawn and again at nightfall; but long continuous command of the air was usually impossible this year for either side.

failed after losing 3 killed and 18 wounded. On the southern flank, the demonstration on the front of the 3rd and 4th Australian Divisions consisted in artillery fire only, but German records show that the 24th Reserve Division astride the Somme thought that its whole front was being attacked.

The attack of June 10th opened the eyes of some participants on both sides. Success was complete and it was beginning to be said that the attack could have gone much farther. The Diggers felt that, if asked, they could have captured the German artillery. A private diary of June 11th records: "It has been said that if only there were ten or twelve divisions to put in behind them, the Australians could break through to Bapaume." Although, as at Ville, the enemy had been warned of the attack, the opposition failed to such a degree that, apart from the two platoons previously allotted to carry trench-mortar ammunition, the support battalion, the 26th, was not called on to help even with carrying parties. Some 325 Germans had been captured, at a cost of about 400 Australian casualties.⁶⁶ Their divisional commander, General Ernst Kabisch, warned the Second German Army that, if, in a few minutes, "a complete battalion had been wiped out as with a sponge," the same thing might happen disastrously on a large scale.⁶⁷

It was clear that the captured Germans knew of no German offensive impending on the Amiens front. Later other prisoners indicated that four of the six German divisions on the Second Army's front were to be immediately relieved. It was conjectured that the enemy might be putting in fresh divisions in order to assist by a side-stroke the main blow at Arras which prisoners still foreshadowed. But a series of very bold raids undertaken by the 4th, 6th, and 10th Brigades on the nights of June 13th-15th brought proof that no such general relief had been carried out;⁶⁸ so far as the Amiens front was

⁶⁶ See *Der Schwarze Tag*, by Ernst Kabisch, p. 14. The Fourth Army's summary notes that one prisoner of the 90th R.I.R. said that the Australians were the best troops he had ever met, but he criticised their bayonet fighting: one man had tried three times to bayonet him, he said, without success. The captures included 30 machine-guns, light and heavy, and six trench-mortars.

⁶⁷ The losses suffered in the actual fighting were about 350; 25th Bn., 11 officers and 167 others; 27th Bn., 3 and 83; 28th, 6 and 70; 7th L.T.M. Bty., 1 man; 7th M.G. Coy., 2 and 8; and Pioneer Bn., 4 men; 51st Bn., 2 and 29; 23rd Bn., 21.

⁶⁸ *Dernancourt-Ville*: At 11.30 p.m. on June 14 three parties of the 24th Bn. (led by N.C.O's, Sgts. A. G. Prime and J. A. Fisher, and Cpl. C. O. McLearn) under command of Lt. J. T. Pocknell raided the German outpost-line on the northern

concerned, there was no sign of any intention of early or serious attack.

bank of the Ancre. Before two of the parties the Germans fled, the raiders chasing them into the barrage. The third found a platoon post from which it brought back 5 prisoners of the 231st R.I.R. (50th Res. Div.) and a machine-gun. Two Victorians who continued their chase into a building found it occupied by a number of Germans and were captured.

Morlancourt: At 12.30 on the same night, covered by a good artillery and trench-mortar barrage, 47 of the 21st Bn. (Vic.) under Lts. W. McConnochie and E. B. Mason raided the German post previously raided on June 10 by the 22nd Bn. Most of the German garrison fled; those who remained were killed or wounded, but documents showed them to belong to the 84th I.R. (54th Div.).

Hamel: At 11.30 on June 15 two parties (each of 30) of the 16th Bn. (W. Aust.) under Capt. W. J. D. Lynas raided a prominent pear-shaped trench south-west of Hamel. The German wire-entanglement had first to be destroyed by two Bangalore torpedoes (tubes filled with high-explosive) carried by a party under Lt. J. E. Piercy. This party was seen by the Germans and was bombed while doing its work; the fuses had therefore to be lit at once, and the raiders began their attack half a minute before time. Lt. A. B. C. Dowling, leading one party, and two sergeants were wounded as they entered the trench. Many Germans were found and surrendered, but, as they could not be brought back, were shot, and many others were killed or wounded in the sunken road leading through the position to Vaire Wood. The parties brought back 5 prisoners and 3 machine-guns. The raiders were recalled in nine minutes. They had 16 wounded, partly by a few shells of the barrage which fell short.

Vaire Wood: At the same hour three parties of the 14th Bn. (Vic.) under Lts. Ramsay Wood, H. W. Thompson, and A. R. Bruford raided different parts of the trench on the western edge of Vaire Wood. Although one party was seen and bombed on reaching the German wire all got in, and 11 prisoners and a machine-gun were brought back. Ramsay Wood with Cpl. E. E. Bishop and L.-Cpl. J. Craig returned to find Sgt. E. Harrison, mortally wounded, and carried him in.

In the 4th Bde.'s raids all three regiments of the 77th Res. Div. were identified.

Villers-Bretonneux: At 11.30 p.m. on June 13 Lt. T. T. Hoskins and a small party of the 40th Bn. (Tas.) attempted a surprise raid on a German post previously discovered by a patrol at the third hangar of the old British aerodrome. A party was first sent out to the right to cause a rustling in the wheat crop, distract the Germans' attention, and cause them to fire and disclose their precise position. This ruse succeeded. A volley of rifle-grenades was next fired from the Australian front line, whereupon Hoskins and his party jumped into the post. They found a number of dugouts crowded, which they bombed, and, after a rough and tumble fight in which Hoskins was wounded, they managed to return with difficulty but without a prisoner.

On the following night, at 1 a.m., after a violent and most effective bombardment for ten minutes by Stokes mortars of the 9th L.T.M. Bty., a small party of the 34th Bn. (N.S.W.) under Sgt. P. C. Mudford raided a post a quarter of a mile farther north and took three prisoners of the 137th I.R. (108th Div.). The actual attack was led by L.-Cpl. G. M. Hunt (Cpl. E. Harbour was killed by a stray shot.)

On June 15 a party of the 39th Bn. (Vic.) under Lt. A. E. Guyett attempted to raid the Germans near Monument Wood in conjunction with the French. A salvo of 5.9-inch shell, however, burst among the Australian party before the raid, putting half the men out of action, and the attempt was abandoned. The French party also was reported to have failed.

(Prime belonged to Castlemaine, Vic.; Fisher, whose correct name was Daly, and who died of wounds on June 16, to Carrington, N.S.W.; McLeur to Bendigo, Vic.; Pocknell, who died on 1 Mar. 1935, to Kerang, Vic.; McConnochie to Melbourne; Mason to Prahran, Vic.; Lynas to Marble Bar, W. Aust.; Piercy to Belmont Park, W. Aust.; Dowling to Kondoparinga, S. Aust.; Ramsay Wood, killed in action on 4 July 1918, to Melbourne; Thompson, died of wounds 9 Aug. 1918, to Fitzroy, Vic.; Bruford, who died on 7 Oct. 1934, to Warracknabeal, Vic.; Bishop to Brunswick, Vic.; Craig, died of wounds 9 Aug. 1918, to Antrim, Ireland, and Melbourne; Harrison to Maffra, Vic.; Hoskins, who died on 6 July 1932, to Launceston, Tas.; Mudford to Taree, N.S.W.; Hunt to Narrabri, N.S.W.; Harbour to Townsville, Q'land; Guyett to Yackandandah, Vic.)

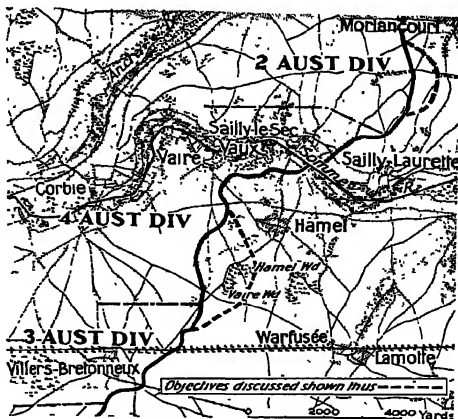
CHAPTER VIII

THE HAMEL PLAN—TANKS, AND THE AMERICANS

THE attack described in the last chapter had been planned before the receipt of Foch's new request for minor offensives. This request, as cited on June 10th by General Monash to the commanders of his three divisions in the line, was that the British should be ready to undertake simultaneously

along the whole British front at an early date which cannot, however, be accurately foreshadowed . . . either (a) substantial raids—on a scale of, say, 100 or 200 men, or (b) captures of territory or localities of tactical value to the enemy, with a view of injuring the enemy's defensive organisation.

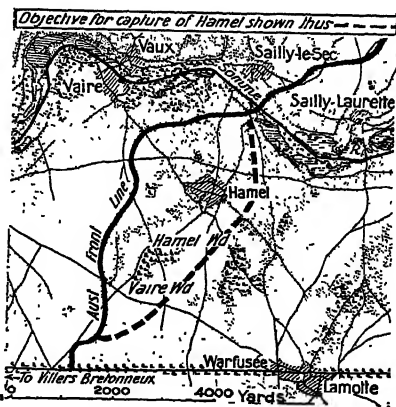
As it happened the attack near the Brick Beacon was carried out on that very night by the 2nd Division. As soon as it was finished, Maj.-General Rosenthal, to meet Monash's request, considered the possibility of thrusting a little further along the Bray-Corbie road on top of the hill, but rejected the notion as likely to be costly and also dangerous unless the Germans were also driven back on the southern side of the river, near Hamel, where their guns were already uncom-
fortably enfilading his flank. General



MacLagan, commanding the 4th Division opposite Hamel, considered a proposal for the capture of Vaire Wood, on his

right front, in conjunction with an advance by the left of the 3rd Division on the plateau north-east of Villers-Bretonneux. General Gellibrand, of the 3rd Division, strongly favoured this plan, but MacLagan feared that even by using the whole of his reserves he would have too few men for digging in. Monash, writing to Fourth Army on June 13th, while mentioning that this would be "the most useful operation" that could be undertaken on the corps front, added that it would require six battalions¹ and movements of artillery occupying several days. "I do not recommend that this operation be carried out at present," he concluded. He merely put forward the programme of raids the most important part of which was carried out, as has already been described, a few nights later in Vaire Wood and the "pear-shaped" trench.²

MacLagan's project, thus temporarily rejected, did not include the capture of Hamel village, which lay lower in the Somme valley, at the north-eastern end of the same spur on which, higher up, the Australian line was sited. Vaire Wood lay on the next spur eastward, the foot of which reached down east of Hamel. In MacLagan's project only the upper part of this spur was to be seized—the capture of the rest would need too many troops; when Rawlinson had urged it upon the Australian Corps in April,³ General White had strongly opposed him, believing that it would entail the risk of "cutting up a division." White was convinced that the British command would eventually need the five Australian divisions as a striking force at some critical stage of the war. But recruiting in Australia had fallen so low that, if they were now involved in an expensive fight,



¹ The front of attack was to be 3,500 yards and the depth of penetration 1,600.

² See p. 241.

³ See Vol. V, pp. 529-30.

there was risk of putting at least one of them permanently out of action. White had held the right policy to be, when once the Australian divisions had stabilised their part of the front, to pull them out and build up their reserves against the time when they would be needed for some vital task. At that time, April 9th, the Hamel project was not a vital task,⁴ and when Rawlinson visited corps headquarters White, by Birdwood's leave, laid his own views before the army commander, who expressed his agreement. White doubtless put the same arguments before Haig when the Commander-in-Chief conferred with Birdwood and his staff on May 17th.

Since then, however, the considerable advances on the crest near Morlancourt and Sailly-Laurette had materially changed the position. On the one hand, the constant annoyance and loss now inflicted by the German artillery south of the Somme, firing into the gullies north of it behind the 2nd Division's protruding flank, had necessitated some counter-action, which at present took the shape of an effort by the artillery to suppress the advanced German batteries. Moreover, the advance of the Germans south of the Somme on April 24th had brought them dangerously close to Hill 104—the northern shoulder of the vital heights at Villers-Bretonneux, from which they could have overlooked Amiens. More room was urgently needed for the defence of this height. There would now therefore be marked advantages in seizing the spur beyond Hamel, and its capture would be easier since the Germans had been outflanked by the Australian advance north of the Somme.

General MacLagan and the staff and brigadiers of the 4th Division, as well as Generals Monash and Rawlinson and their advisers, had all, at various times, discussed this operation; but it would require more than the reserve brigade of one division to carry it out, and General White's reasoning as to the need for conserving the Australian Corps appears to have still prevailed. To capture Hamel would require a full division, and only a task of first-rate importance would justify the risk of laming one.

⁴ White asked Rawlinson what important end was served by it. Rawlinson replied that without some such action he could not get the French command south of the Luce to eliminate the German salient that threatened Villers-Bretonneux. White replied that there was surely something wrong if they must do something useless in order to induce the French to do something useful.

But, on the very day on which Gellibrand and MacLagan made their suggestions to Monash, there arrived on the railway beside the main Amiens-Doullens road, a few miles from corps headquarters, a succession of trains loaded with the 13th Tank Battalion—monsters of the latest type, which crawled from the trucks to relieve another battalion, the 1st, furnished with the older type of tanks of which the 4th Australian Division had such disastrous experience at Bullecourt. With this arrival the 5th Brigade of tanks, lying in support of the Fourth Army's front, became a completely modern force.⁵

**Deus ex
machina**

Ever since the Battle of Cambrai the leaders of the Tank Corps, believing that the tank must play a decisive part in the final offensives of the war, had been eager to work out suitable tactics for an attack of infantry combined with the new tanks which were expected to arrive in the middle of 1918. On January 3rd Brig.-Genl. Hugh Elles,⁶ commanding the Tank Corps, had sent to G.H.Q. a protest against the ignoring of the tanks in its "Memorandum on Defensive Measures" laying down the methods for meeting the expected German offensive. He hoped that the coming of the Mark V tank would enable G.H.Q. to "create new tactics," and he gave an indication of what those tactics, always offensive, might be. He urged G.H.Q. to

think ahead in order to take advantage of an arm which at present the enemy is not fully prepared to counter. The eventual counter to the tank . . . can, to my mind, only be the tank. We have an opportunity. Once tank meets tank the opportunity will vanish.

Now that the new tanks had arrived Elles was most anxious to win over commanders to these views. He knew that, since Bullecourt, the Australians had been strongly disinclined to

⁵ It consisted of the 2nd, 8th, and 13th Bns. (each of 36 Mark V tanks), and also a company of light tanks ("whippets")—these last having been lent by Third Army to replace the 17th Armoured Car Bn., which had been attached to the French Army in the emergency of the German attack between Noyon and Montdidier. The 8th Bn., and one company (12 tanks) of the 13th, lay behind the Aust. Corps; the 2nd Bn. and the "whippets" behind the III Corps; and the main part of the 13th Bn. lay at Vaux-en-Amienois, behind Amiens, as army reserve.

⁶ Gen. Sir Hugh Elles, K.C.B., K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O., D.S.O., p.s.c. D.A.Q.M.G., 4th Div., Aug. 1914; Gen. Staff, G.H.Q., 1915-16; commanded Tank Corps, France, 1916-19; Master-General of Ordnance, War Office, 1934-37. Of London; b. Kensington, London, 27 Apr. 1880.

rely upon tanks, and accordingly he visited General Monash and invited him and his chief-of-staff, Brig.-Genl. Blamey, to see the new tanks at work at their field headquarters.⁷ Monash was greatly impressed by what he saw there. Apparently both to Monash and to Rawlinson there suggested itself the notion: "Here is an instrument to lighten the task and the losses of the infantry, and render possible the Hamel operation." At all events on June 18th Rawlinson's chief-of-staff, Maj.-General Montgomery,⁸ driving to MacLagan's headquarters, chanced to meet there General Monash, who had come from corps headquarters to suggest and discuss the same operation. Meanwhile Rawlinson himself arrived at corps headquarters to talk matters over with Monash. On the Australian commander's return the project was thrashed out with Rawlinson, Montgomery, and Blamey. Monash states that he made the project

conditional upon being supplied with the assistance of tanks, a small increase of my artillery and an addition to my air resources . . . Lord Rawlinson . . . requested me to submit a concrete proposal in writing.⁹

Rawlinson said that the attack must be made with a number of tanks sufficient to secure success at the least possible cost in casualties to the Australian Corps. Apparently one battalion (36 tanks) was first suggested but Rawlinson said he would double the number if necessary. His diary says,

MacLagan is not overjoyed at the prospect of tanks, but we will get him round when he has had experience of the new type.

Monash's first step was to get into touch with the comman-

⁷ Other tank officers were equally keen as missionaries for their corps. Capt. R. F. Maurice (13th Tank Bn.) gave informal talks to Australian officers quartered near him at Heilly, and afterwards was asked by them to lecture at their brigade schools. On June 13 the commander of the 5th Tank Bde., Br.-Gen. A. Courage, had already sent to Gen. Rawlinson, and to the commanders of the III and Aust. Corps, some notes as to the speed with which some of the new tanks had covered three or four miles at night in the normal process of relief. In the III Corps area four tanks had gone 5,750 yards, mostly downhill, in 40 minutes (rate—4½ miles an hour). Three relieved tanks had returned over the same ground in 60 minutes (3½ miles an hour). A relief at Bois l'Abbé was carried out at the rate of 2½ miles an hour, but on that occasion the tanks went slowly part of the way to avoid making too much noise.

⁸ F.-M. Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd, G.C.B., K.C.M.G., p.s.c. G.S.O. (1), 4th Div., 1914-15; B.G.G.S., IV Corps, 1915-16; M.G.G.S., Fourth Army, 1916-19; D.C.G.S., India, 1920-22; Adjutant-General, War Office, 1931-33; C.I.G.S., War Office, 1933-36. Of Co. Tyrone, Ireland; b. London, 6 Dec. 1871.

⁹ *The Australian Victories in France in 1918*, p. 44. (Rawlinson was not then a peer).

der of the 5th Tank Brigade, Brig.-Genl. Courage.¹⁰ No
A tank attack dominion force contained any tanks, and Australian troops had not been present at the great experiment at Cambrai on the 20th of November 1917, when the tanks played the decisive part. The Australian staff had no acquaintance with the tactics devised by the staff of the Tank Corps, practised in that battle and since elaborated to give more scope to the more agile Mark V and "whippet" tanks. Brig.-Genl. Courage naturally put forward a plan based on the tactics approved by Tank Corps Headquarters, and Monash accepted it.¹¹ In this the usual rôles of infantry, artillery, and other arms were modified to allow the tanks the scope their leaders desired. The tanks were to capture the ground; the infantry was to help them in overcoming strong-points, "mopping-up" trenches, and consolidating the position.

The tanks, in accordance with Tank Corps theory, would advance in three lines.¹² First, ahead of the infantry would go a line of them to operate independently of the infantry but protect its advance and move as rapidly as possible to the rear of the chief German positions, cutting off their garrisons and barring the approach of reinforcements. These tanks would obviously fulfil the most important functions of the barrage,¹³ incidentally also rolling down pathways through the German wire-entanglements. Behind them—very close at the start, in order to escape the German barrage, but the interval increasing as the advanced tanks outstripped the infantry—would come the infantry with a second force of tanks, slightly stronger than the first and charged with overcoming any opposition still remaining. These tanks would move with the infantry to its objective. Finally in rear would come a smaller tank force,

¹⁰ Br.-Gen. A. Courage, D.S.O., M.C.; 15th Hussars. Commanded 2nd Tank Bde., 1917-18; 5th Tank Bde., 1918; 2nd Tank Group, 1918-19; b. Leatherhead, Surrey, Eng., 22 Oct. 1875.

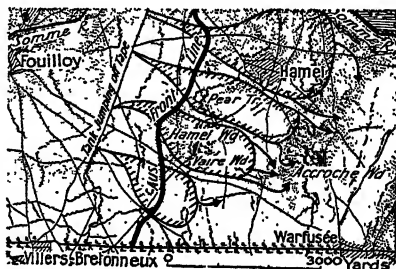
¹¹ Courage's memorandum was sent in on June 20, and Monash's first scheme drawn up on the 21st.

¹² As lines were not intended to be strictly kept, the tanks being left free to manoeuvre, their formations were referred to as "echelons."

¹³ A paper issued by Tank Corps H.Q. on June 27, however, says: "Though the effect of tanks leading forward infantry may be compared to that of the artillery barrage, the infantry should not look upon it as such, but should regard the tanks as armoured fighting patrols or mechanical scouts, thrown out . . . not to exonerate them from fighting but to give them more latitude in the use of their machine-guns, rifles, and bayonets."

about half the strength of each of its predecessors, to replace any of the infantry's tanks that were out of action, or to complete the capture of any strong-points in which the enemy might still hold out after the main attack had swept past. The three echelons would be respectively labelled "advanced sections"¹⁴ (15 tanks in all), "main body sections" (21), and "mopping-up sections" (9). Courage suggested that one tank battalion and one company should take part, that is, 48 tanks of which 3 should be in reserve. Counting the main front of attack as 5,500 yards, this would give one main-body tank to every 265 yards.¹⁵

Courage pointed out that there were three main centres of resistance to be seized, Vaire Wood (including Hamel Wood), Hamel village, and the pear-shaped redoubt that formed the tip of the protruding nose-shaped trench between these two.¹⁶ The tank force should be cross-divided into three parts corresponding with these sectors, with a small additional force on the right to help the infantry to swing forward the line on the Villers-Bretonneux flank. In accordance with the practice at Cambrai and the traditional view of the Tank Corps, there would be no rigid creeping barrage to serve as a screen for the infantry—tank officers had always contended that the action of their machines would be disadvantageously cramped by such a bombardment. But, as Courage constantly insisted—and as was obvious to any one who remembered Bullecourt—tanks were "a very vulnerable target to the enemy guns," and they should therefore be screened by smoke



The areas enclosed in hachured lines were to be seized by the several parts of the tank force; advanced tanks would go farther, as shown.

¹⁴ Each company of tanks contained 4 sections, each comprising 3 tanks.

¹⁵ At Cambrai some 350 tanks attacked on a front of 13,000 yards; at Hamel eventually 60 on a front of about 6,000 yards. The density at Cambrai was therefore between two and three times as great, but the objective was many times deeper.

¹⁶ Courage called it "Circular Post."

shells from German observers on the heights on either flank—near the Roman road, and near Morlancourt north of the Somme. At Cambrai the British artillery had shelled enemy positions ahead of the tanks' advance, continually lengthening its range so as to keep this bombardment ahead of them, and this procedure was approved for Hamel also.¹⁷ In addition, to prevent the tanks being detected by the noise from their exhausts when moving up to their starting line during the night before the attack,

a few aeroplanes with a noisy type of engine should fly above the tanks and enemy lines in order to drown the noise of the tank engine. If the enemy is bombed [by these 'planes] it will tend to keep him below ground. This action will help to ensure the attack coming as a surprise to the enemy.

General Courage added that low-flying aeroplanes should keep watch for German anti-tank guns during the advance, and, if any were seen, should bomb and machine-gun them so as to help the tanks to attack them.¹⁸ On no account were tanks to remain in the open when their tasks were finished.

Adopting these methods of tank warfare, and basing his infantry's attack upon them, General Monash drew up a scheme of an attack which would be "primarily a tank operation." His own effort must be to co-ordinate the tanks' action with that of all the other arms. He proposed that the artillery should help to drown the noise of the tanks in the last 1,000 yards of their approach to the starting-point by laying down shortly before dawn a harassing bombardment, as was done normally whenever an enemy attack was apprehended. To accustom the enemy to this procedure, it should be begun at once and carried out daily with gas and smoke shells included so that the Germans might be led to expect gas whenever the bombardment contained smoke. On the final morning the gas would be omitted, but General Monash hoped that the Germans would put on their gas-masks and so hamper themselves in detecting and resisting the attack. Before the actual starting hour all artillery action should be such as would normally be taken if a German attack

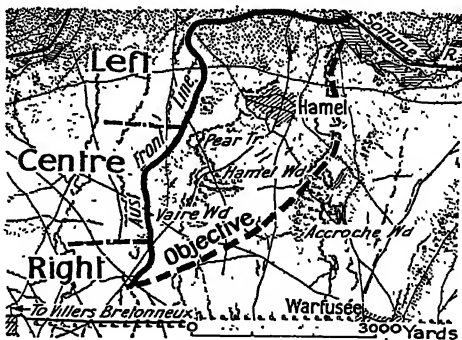
¹⁷ Gen. Monash proposed that the bombardment should form a kind of "jumping barrage," making 25 lifts.

¹⁸ No. 8 Sqn., R.A.F., had been regularly allotted to the Tank Corps to practise this and other tasks.

was still awaited on this front. With the launching of the attack the artillery would smother the German batteries with its fire, would smash certain of the centres of resistance and bombard others well ahead of the tanks, and—in conjunction with trench-mortars—lay down a screen of smoke around the whole front and flanks of the advance. If possible, smoke should also be fired along the rest of the corps front in order to deceive the enemy as to the point of attack. A considerable proportion of the artillery would have to take up advanced positions from which it could cover the new line, when reached, and the troops digging in. These guns should take up their advanced positions before the battle, and must not disclose themselves until the attack began. A couple of batteries should be emplaced on Hill 104 so as to help the tanks by direct fire and harass counter-attacks.

With such a plan—the main fighting being done by one “or preferably two” tank battalions (that is, by 36 or 72 tanks)—Monash estimated that he would require only 7,500 infantry, and of these about one-half would be used merely to hold the old line defensively

during the battle and to take over the new line forty-eight hours after the start. The attacking infantry would advance in three waves—the first to overcome the main centres of resistance (that is, Hamel village and Vaire Wood) and



then stay there with a few tanks to mop them up; the second, double the strength of the first, to pass on with the main-body tanks and go straight to the final objective; the third wave to act as reserve and carriers and to complete the reduction of any centres still holding out. Monash altered Courage's cross-division; the force would still be divided into three parts but the southern one would comprise two battalions lent by the

Villers-Bretonneux division to swing up the flank on a front of exactly one mile.¹⁹ In the centre section (front $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles) the main obstacle would be Vaire-Hamel Wood, though "Pear Trench" also would have to be overcome at the very outset of the advance. Here one battalion of infantry would accompany the main-body tanks, a support wave of two battalions passing on with the tanks to occupy the final objective and a fourth battalion moving up as carriers in rear. Similarly in the northern sector (front $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles) one battalion accompanying the main-body tanks would seize Hamel village, two support battalions then following the tanks to the final objective, and a fourth battalion carrying.

Thus the attacking infantry with its immediate reserves would amount to ten battalions, and, if each of these had 550 rifles in the attack, the force would amount to only 5,500, a very slender one for a thrust, in parts, more than a mile deep, on a $3\frac{1}{2}$ -mile front.²⁰ If this force was to have early relief after the battle, it would be necessary to have available two more brigades; and, in order to avoid the casualties falling upon a single division, General Monash decided to build up the attacking force from three divisions. This would enable him also to pick and rest his troops. The force would be under the commander (MacLagan) and staff of the 4th Division from whose sector it would be launched. The 3rd Australian Division (which on June 29th would go into rest from the Villers-Bretonneux front) would contribute a brigade; the 4th Division would contribute another (besides the two to take over the front subsequently); and the 2nd Division, which would have replaced the 3rd at Villers-Bretonneux, would temporarily place its left brigade under the 4th Division. Of field artillery Monash calculated that he would need four extra brigades. Engineer stores must be secured, and the action of aeroplanes for contact and counter-attack patrols, and for low flying and bombing both during and after the advance, must be arranged. The preparation, he wrote, would take seven days from the

¹⁹ The depth of this part of the advance would diminish from over 1,000 yards on the left to 120 yards on the right.

²⁰ Less than one man to a yard of front. At Third Ypres the Australian infantry had attacked to the same depth with as many as six to a yard, but against an enemy much stronger in men, guns, and position.

time when authority was given to proceed. As the relief of the 3rd Division by the 2nd would occur on June 28th and 29th, the attack could not take place until early in July. Meanwhile training of the infantry with the new tanks should be begun as soon as possible. But, as success depended on surprise, conversations about the project must be guarded, typing of plans and orders reduced to a minimum, maps and documents kept under key, movement restricted to the few hours of dark, and new earthworks and dumps camouflaged.

Such was the scheme of which an outline was submitted by Monash on June 21st to Rawlinson with the opinion that it envisaged "the minimum operation that would appear to be worth undertaking." Monash added:

Any substantial losses would precipitate the time when the question of the reduction in the number of Australian divisions would have to be seriously considered. It is for higher authority to decide whether a portion of the present resources in Australian man-power in this corps would be more profitably ventured upon such an operation as this, which is in itself a very attractive proposition, rather than to conserve such resources for employment elsewhere.

Rawlinson at once asked Monash what was the position concerning Australian infantry reinforcements. The reply showed that, apart from men returning from hospital, there were only 350 at the base depot at Le Havre in France and 4,871 in England. The present shortage of infantry in the five divisions was 8,255; so that, even if all the reinforcements were immediately sent over from England—which could not be done—they would not fill it.²¹ G.H.Q., however, had recently ordered a "temporary" reduction of the establishment of British infantry battalions from 966 N.C.O's and men to 900—a step consequent upon the heavy losses in March and April; and the order for a similar reduction in the A.I.F. had just been issued by General Birdwood.²² Monash pointed out to Rawlinson that it would mean a saving of nearly 4,000 infantry, and that the existing shortage would thus be more than balanced, especially when the numbers returning from hospital were added to the reinforcements.

Rawlinson thereupon, on June 23rd, sent the plan of the

²¹ The 1st Div. was 1,340 short, 2nd 1,686, 3rd 2,632, 4th 989, 5th 1,608.

²² As G.O.C., A.I.F.

operation together with these figures to Haig, asking for leave to carry it out. To Monash's reasons he added several of his own. The blow should upset the German defences and any possible plans for an offensive against Villers-Bretonneux; it should disorganise the Germans at Hamel whose morale was already shaken; and it would maintain the initiative on the Australian Corps front. He added:

If the operation is successful the casualties should not be great, as it is intended to make the operation essentially a surprise tank attack. I consider that the advantages gained will be well worth the cost.

The Fourth Army could supply the necessary tanks, but Rawlinson asked for one bombing squadron of big Handley-Page aeroplanes, and six brigades of field and two of heavy artillery from the local G.H.Q. reserve. As surprise would be endangered by postponement, the date, when once fixed, should not be altered; this attack, therefore, should

not be treated as one of the minor operations which have been prepared and are to be held ready awaiting orders from General Foch.

In order to lessen the danger of leakage Rawlinson's chief-of-staff, Maj.-General Montgomery, forwarded a copy of this letter to General Monash in lieu of an order and informed him that he proposed to issue no more instructions for the operation. Haig's consent was given—he even directed that a cavalry division should be held ready against the possibility of a panic flight by the surprised enemy—and Monash proceeded with his plans. The date fixed for the attack was July 4th.²³

But these plans were quickly changed in two important respects. First, Monash found among his subordinates intense opposition to Courage's scheme by which the regular barrage was to be dispensed with and the success and safety of the infantry would wholly depend upon the accurate and punctual working of the tanks. In spite of strong advocacy by Courage and Montgomery, Monash's chief-of-staff, Brig.-Genl. Blamey,

**Change
of
plan**

²³ The date at first provisionally chosen, July 2, was changed by Gen. Monash, as the brigade of the 3rd Div. considered by Gen. Gellibrand to be fittest for the enterprise—the 11th, from the Outer States—would not be ready for it until the 4th. If the attack had occurred on the 2nd the 10th Bde. (Victoria) would have been employed.

and the field artillery commander, Brig.-Genl. Coxen, urged their chief against such an experiment. "It's a purely limited attack that you're making," they said. "We know we can make an absolute certainty of it by relying upon artillery, and you can get the artillery lent you for it—so why not make it a certainty?" Blamey drew up a paper setting forth the arguments for and against sole reliance on tanks.²⁴ Further, on June 25th at 4th Divisional Headquarters a conference presided over by MacLagan, and attended by the brigadiers concerned and the tank leaders, gave short shrift to the plan of omitting the normal barrage. The 4th Division was the same that in April 1917 had been forced by General Gough, against its leaders' wishes, to rely on tanks instead of the barrage for the crushing of a way through the German wire at Bullecourt and for protection in the subsequent attack. On the night originally fixed for that operation no tank had arrived, and the waiting infantry had to be precariously withdrawn at the last moment from its "jumping-off" tapes; despite that warning, when the operation was called on again the next night only four of the eleven allotted tanks were up in time for the start, and not one reached the wire before the attacking infantry. Facing wire and Germans without assistance, the division captured the confronting Hindenburg Line but then, through lack of artillery protection—due to misreports of the tanks' positions²⁵—was isolated and cut to pieces.

At the conference so unanimous were the Australian officers, including MacLagan, that the objections naturally raised by the two tank leaders, especially by Lieut.-Col. Bingham²⁶ who would command the tank units actually attacking, were quickly submerged by the opposing opinion. The completeness and

²⁴ On the one hand (this paper said) the employment of tanks instead of barrage would favour surprise and ensure a bigger haul of prisoners. The new Mark V tank would exert great moral effect. Also "tanks can see whereas barrage is blind." On the other hand tanks were not most suitable for an operation with a limited objective. The troops would be uncertain whether the tanks would come up in time—a lack of confidence which was unfortunate but due to experience with less effective machines, whereas the infantry knew and trusted the method of attacking under cover of its artillery.

²⁵ The tanks were not to blame for these reports. For the detailed account, see *Vol. IV, (ch. viii-ix)*. Since Bullecourt tanks had worked very successfully with the 4th Div. at Messines (*Vol. IV, pp. 620-1, 628, 635*), but in a purely subsidiary rôle.

²⁶ Lt.-Col. Hon. J. D. Y. Bingham, D.S.O.; 15th Hussars. Commanded 8th Tank Bn., 1918-19. Of Co. Down, Ireland; b. Bangor Castle, Co. Down, 11 Aug. 1880.

But, provided that the infantry were preceded by a normal creeping barrage, their commanders were ready—and even, as the result of tactful persuasion, anxious—to have them assisted by a large force of tanks. They would even rely largely upon them for the trampling down of lanes through the German wire-entanglements, which were known to be generally weak and which would also have been damaged by trench-mortars firing unostentatiously during the daily harassing fire and by the passing of the creeping barrage which would include a proportion of shells with instantaneous fuses. The tactics were fundamentally changed. The attack was no longer to be a “tank operation” but a normal assault by infantry, with tanks attached in order to keep down the losses. In that respect the machines would play a vital part. Both Monash and MacLagan intended that wherever the infantry came upon serious resistance it should lie down and summon a tank to overcome the obstacle—the tank’s attention being drawn by the firing of a rifle-grenade bursting into white smoke over the position from which the enemy was checking the advance.²⁷

A detailed map of the Hamel area during the Meuse-Argonne offensive. The map shows the Meuse River flowing from the top left towards the bottom center. Key locations include Vaire, Sully-le Sec, Sully-Laurette, Hamel, Hamel Ridge, and Warfusée. Military units are indicated by numbers and abbreviations: 1 Bn, 1 BN, 4 BN, 2 Bns, and 11 Bns. A dashed line with arrows points from the bottom left towards Hamel, labeled 'Objective'. A scale bar at the bottom right indicates 3000 yards. The map is titled 'To Hiers Brienneux' at the bottom left.

²⁷ "If the tanks fail to get the strong-points," Monash told the Australian war correspondents on July 3, "the infantry cannot try. . . . They are to let the tanks flatten out any serious opposition which they locate. They have been told, in such cases, to lie down and let the tank go ahead." Until the actual battle it was uncertain whether tanks could keep as close as infantry to the barrage; the order of the 21st Bn. for example, says they could not.

of the line—tanks and infantry—would skirt round these centres of opposition and after closing in beyond them, would move to the final objective, on the ridge. It was hoped that even by this slower method a number of the enemy might be cut off, and that the tanks would increase the capture.

In other respects the tank commanders' plans for the assembly and approach of the tanks were generally accepted, with the proviso that before the final night the machines should be brought up close enough to make their punctual arrival a certainty. The infantry was to assemble on its tapes in the usual manner, and would advance at zero hour, when the barrage would fall 200 yards ahead of it. The barrage would lie there for four minutes during which time the troops would edge up close to the line of shell-bursts. The barrage would then begin to move forward and this was the moment at which the main-body tanks, coming up from the rear, should reach the infantry;²⁸ from then onwards the monsters would move as close to the barrage as was safe for tanks. It was proposed that, besides the smoke screens on the flanks, the field artillery barrage should include one smoke shell in every ten shells. The barrage would advance by lifts of 100 yards every three minutes until about half-way when, during the mopping-up of Vaire Wood and part of Hamel, it would pause for ten minutes, allowing the battalions for the final objectives to get into position. It would then advance rather more slowly (100 yards in four minutes) to the final objective. Machine-guns would thicken the barrage, in particular by firing from the northern flank, whence they could enfilade the enemy.

These proposals constituted, as MacLagan and Lieut.-Col. Lavarack, his chief-of-staff, well realised, a "complete change of plan." Apparently after further discussion by his assistants, Blamey and Coxen, with General Courage, Monash adopted them and asked Rawlinson for a clear indication of his support. Rawlinson seems to have spoken at once to Courage and MacLagan indicating that he approved of the barrage and desired them to get on with the details of the plan.²⁹ For the

²⁸ The twelve reserve tanks would be following them, 300 yards in rear.

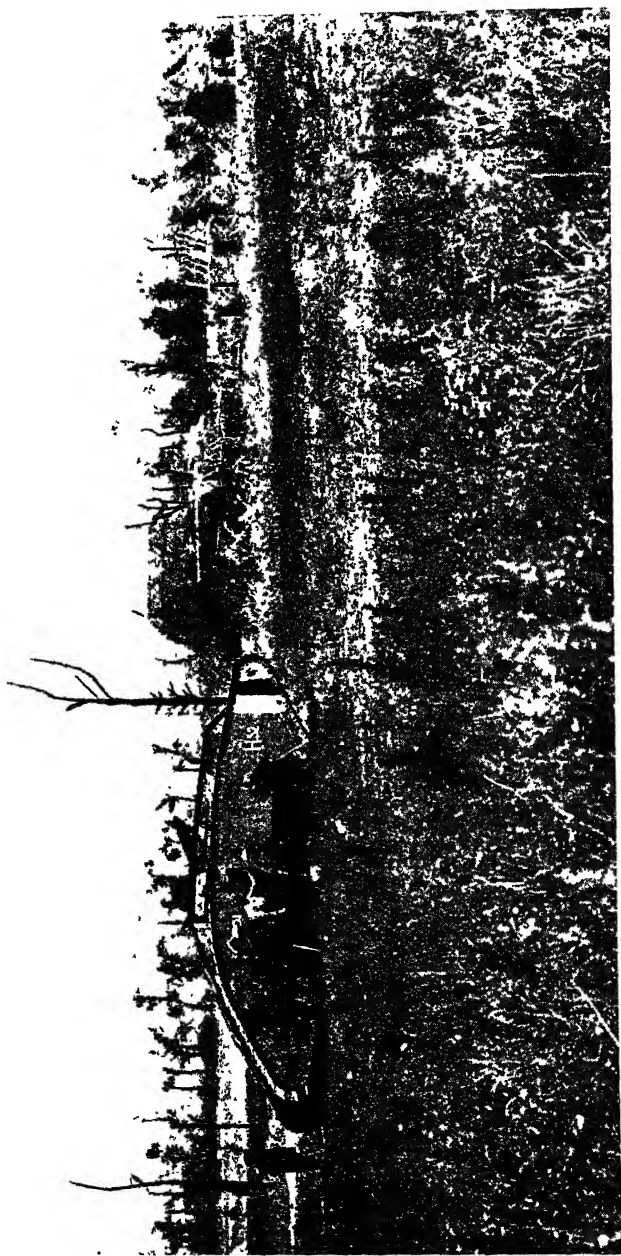
²⁹ Rawlinson also informed Haig of the change.



13. AMERICAN INFANTRY RESTING ON THE WAY TO THE HAMEL ATTACK, 3RD JULY, 1918

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E2694.

To face p. 256.



14. HAMEL SUR SOMME

Photographed on 5th July, 1918, showing one of the few disabled tanks, and the tricolour flag placed by Capt. Moran on one of the houses.

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No E3843

To face p. 257.

whole front of his corps Monash was given twenty-nine brigades of field artillery—326 guns or howitzers—of which eleven brigades came from outside the corps. Sixteen brigades were allotted to the main attack and controlled by the 4th Division. The corps heavy artillery would comprise thirteen brigades, four coming from outside—313 pieces in all. The barrage would be as full as at the recent attack near the Brick Beacon, with an eighteen-pounder gun to every 25 yards of the active front³⁰—about half the density of the barrages at Third Ypres. It was estimated that the Germans had about 247 field-guns and 130 heavies on the corps front.

A second change of plan was made about the same time. On June 20th American infantry battalions, which the staffs on this front had previously seen only in areas far in rear, began to pour into the back area near corps and army headquarters. They did not belong to the divisions that had been training longest in the British zone; of the ten American divisions that had been sent to the British for instruction³¹ the first five had been transferred by Foch to the French zone in the emergency following the German attack of May 27th.³² By the second

³⁰ Including the heavy artillery the ratio would be about a gun to 13 yards. The artillery of the 4th Div. for Hamel included the artilleries of the 17th and 47th Brit. Divs., as well as "army" brigades and some from all Australian divisions except the 1st. They were under Br.-Gen. W. L. H. Burgess and were distributed as follows.—

Right Group (Lt.-Col. T. I. C. Williams): 10 Bde. A.F.A., 189 Army Bde. R.F.A., 78, 79, and 236 Bdes. R.F.A.

Southern Group (Lt.-Col. H. M. Ballingall): 23, 179, and 14 Army Bdes. R.F.A.

Left Group (Lt.-Col. H. V. B. de Satge): 289 Army Bde. R.F.A., 4 Bde. R.H.A., 235 Bde. R.F.A.

Centre Group (Lt.-Col. H. O. Caddy): 11, 13, and 14 Bdes. A.F.A., 150 Army Bde. R.F.A.

Special Task: 16 Army Bde. R. H. A. (Lt.-Col. J. G. B. Allardyce).

The heavy artillery comprised:

"Z" *Group* (Lt.-Col. H. Rowan-Robinson): 14, 21, and 68 Bdes.

"Y" *Group* (Lt.-Col. W. F. T. Corrie): 87, 78, 5, and 69 Bdes.

"X" *Group* (Lt.-Col. G. N. Hill): 9, 51, and 27 Bdes.

"W" *Group* (Lt.-Col. F. E. Andrewes): 47, 23, and 73 Bdes.

V/Aust. Corps Heavy Trench Mortar Battery (Capt. A. E. Wallis).

³¹ See pp. 156-7.

³² The divisions withdrawn comprised the four that had by then completed their arrival in the British zone—4th, 28th, 35th, and 77th—and the 82nd, which was still arriving at the time of the emergency but would move to the French zone in mid-June. The 35th (to which the skeleton 30th Brit. Div. had been "affiliated") was to have received experience in the line with the Aust. Corps, and the 82nd (affiliated to the 66th Div.) with the II Corps, but the course of training had barely been begun when these divisions were withdrawn.

half of June, however, most of the second batch of five divisions for the British zone had arrived. The arrangement approved by General Pershing was that, after assembling in the back area, each American division (with one of the reduced British divisions to help it) should train for a month under its own officers but with British advice. It should then go forward (still with its British advisers) for training in the British front line, each of its twelve infantry battalions being attached to a British brigade in the line. In a third stage the American battalions would re-form their regiments, and each of the four regiments of the division would serve as a brigade in a British division.³³ The division, whose artillery and transport would not be in the English zone, would finally be re-formed and used wherever Foch and Pershing required.³⁴

The newly landed American divisions had barely completed their assembly and were beginning the first stage of their training, when, expecting a German stroke and having sent many of his earlier reserves to the French, Haig on June 14th asked Pershing to let him move two divisions, the 27th and 33rd, close up behind the fronts of the Third and Fourth Armies³⁵ so that, in case of need, they would be within a day's march of the emergency trench-systems. They would continue, he added, to carry out the approved programme of training.³⁶ Pershing agreed, and on June 21st the 33rd Division marched to Pierregot and Molliens-au-Bois, coming under the III British Corps. One of the two infantry brigades—the 65th—of this division was to train with the Australian Corps, and the brigade headquarters were placed at Allonville, beside those of the Australian division in reserve (then the 2nd). Selected officers and men from its two regiments (129th and 130th),³⁷ as well as some from the 66th (131st and 132nd

³³ An American regiment, comprising three battalions, was equivalent to a British brigade.

³⁴ In theory Foch could order Allied divisions from one national front to another at will; but, though he could and did so act in emergency, in practice his action required the concurrence of the national C-in-C.

³⁵ The step was possibly suggested to Haig by Maj.-Gen. G. W. Read, commanding the II American Corps, who, in a letter of June 11, stated that the divisions were fit to help in emergency. Haig considered the 30th American Div. already close enough to the front: the 78th and 80th were held to be too untrained for such use.

³⁶ At that time the 66th and 30th Brit. Divs. were also attached to them.

³⁷ An American brigade comprised 2 regiments each of 3 battalions. It was thus almost as strong as two British brigades.

Regiments) were, from June 12th onwards, attached to Australian brigades in the front line. On June 24th one of the three machine-gun battalions of the 33rd Division and two of its machine-gun companies were ordered to Querrieu Wood to hold part of the rear line of the Australian Corps. American engineer units had long been attached to the corps;³⁸ but, for most Australian troops, this was the first contact with Americans in the Great War, and the impression made on both sides was very deep. Lieut.-Col. Sanborn,³⁹ whose regiment, the 131st, was allotted to the III British Corps, but who himself was for a few days (June 12th-16th) attached to the headquarters of that stout Australian fighter, General "Pompey" Elliott (15th Brigade), afterwards wrote:

The Australians appeared to be more akin to our class in that they were an independent, alert, energetic lot of men and splendid fighters. From the first when our soldiers came in contact with them they mixed well and took kindly to each other.⁴⁰

³⁸ Part of the 6th Regt. of U.S. Engineers had reached the corps in May, and the 108th Regt. (33rd Div.) on June 13. Moreover, a few of the 35th and 82nd Divs., and some small parties of infantry from the regiments of the 33rd Div. had already been given a few days' experience with the Australian front-line garrisons. Br.-Gen. Elliott, always most thorough, had ordered his battalions to allow the American subalterns to command Australian platoons in the line, and their N.C.O.'s "to do duties of their rank." After watching a raiding party of the 59th under Lt. J. H. Wadeson practising at the reserve trenches for a raid near Ville, the attached Americans had wanted to take part in it. (This raid, made on June 23 by a party of 30, was unusually interesting by reason of the fact that the raiders wore body armour—of the British type, much lighter than the German. The artillery barrage was accurate, that of the Stokes mortars—15th Bty.—firing, for once, with the old type of green cartridges, being also excellent. Within 15 minutes of the start, a prisoner from the 52nd I.R., 107th German Div., was back and the "identification" had been notified to brigade headquarters. At this stage word went that Lt. Wadeson was missing, and, to find him, the intelligence officer of the 59th, Lt. W. F. Stevenson, and Sgt. C. H. Palmer at once returned to the German trench on which the British barrage was due to fall. As they reached it they were called back, Wadeson having been found. Wadeson belonged to Tatura, Vic.; Stevenson to Moss Vale, N.S.W.; Palmer to Corinella, Vic.)

The Americans were not allowed to take part in the raid, but the brigade diary notes: "These American soldiers seem an exceptionally smart lot and are most keen to learn. They are getting on exceptionally well with the officers and men of the brigade.

"June 24 . . . American personnel . . . returned to their units and are enthusiastic about the interesting and instructive time they have had."

Col. Sanborn (131st Regt.), says the same diary, had "many talks" with Elliott; and Col. Abel Davis (132nd Regt.), who was similarly attached to the 4th Bde., wrote on June 20 to Brig.-Gen. Brand: "As you unquestionably observed, I was much interested in the activities of your brigade, enjoyed the experience, and was greatly benefited by it . . . I hope that I shall have an opportunity to serve with you and your troops."

³⁹ Col. J. B. Sanborn, D.S.C., D.S.M. Commanded 131st Amer. Regt., 1917-19. Publisher; of Chicago, U.S.A., b. near Manchester, N.H., U.S.A., 8 Dec. 1855. (Was awarded D.S.O.) Died, 22 Dec. 1934.

⁴⁰ Quoted from Col. Sanborn's report to his division on the Battle of Hamel.

Of the Australian side Capt. E. J. Rule writes (with, for once, unconscious humour):

These Yanks view things much the same as we do, and their general trend of ideas was very sensible indeed.⁴¹

The diary of an Australian war correspondent, describing a journey from the base to corps headquarters on June 10th, says:

We noticed the Americans first about Samer. Montreuil was thick with them, fine looking men, just arrived by march to-day, in their dusty boots, green-yellow canvas gaiters, coats shaped to the waist, and felt Puritan hats. One of their officers told Wilkins the other day that he felt as much at home amongst Australians as amongst his own countrymen.

This similarity had strongly impressed the two Australian official war correspondents, who in February 1918 visited the early American training area and front near Toul, south-east of Verdun. One of them noted:

We felt to-day as though we had been walking amongst ghosts. Wherever one goes one is struck more and more by the likeness of these men, amongst whom we have been moving, to the men of the old 1st (Aust.) Divn. at Mena camp and behind the lines in Gallipoli. . .

(At Neuf Chatel) as we motored down the hill with the open pasture on either side we suddenly found on the left-hand side of the road a number of groups of men gathered around several machine-guns. . . . A couple of young officers at once left them and strolled over towards us, saluting Magruder⁴² as they came up. They wore the same khaki as our men, although they call it "drab," and they wore English tin hats. They were big men, above the ordinary height, and the sight of them took one back at one jump to the picture of many a little group . . . on the desert at Mena and behind the lines at Anzac, gathered around our own machine-guns in the days when the machine-gun was a new toy, more or less. There was the same quiet over-seriousness about their work. The two youngsters might have been Australian officers taken from any infantry regiment in our own 1st Divn. One of them was exceedingly like little Moore, who was beside me at Lone Pine and now commands the 3rd Battalion. He had the same quiet manner and the same pride in his small section. He put them through the motions of setting up and firing the gun, taking it to pieces, and so forth as I have seen it done a hundred times. The men were simply racing one another to see who could get through this work the quickest. . . . One could see where the strength of the American Army lies. Beyond all question it lies in the intelligence of the men and the keenness and character of the young officers. It was

⁴¹ *Jacka's Mob*, p. 299.

⁴² Maj. (later Col.) B. Magruder, D.S.M., an American regular officer who was acting as guide. Of Columbia, U.S.A.; b. Washington, D.C., 3 Dec. 1882.

the old 1st Aust. Divn. over again to the life . . . the swing of them, and the make up of the men, and the colour of them, and the independent look upon their faces . . . the manner of the young staff officer. . . .⁴³

The same resemblance was obvious to British officers. Brig.-Genl. Wagstaff, who served the first half of the war at Anzac and with the 5th Australian Division in France, and the second half as the British representative attached to American G.H.Q., told the two Australian correspondents that

the two forces were the nearest thing possible to one another. Their discipline is founded on the personal influence of the officer over his men. They have to rely upon the character and personality of the officer, and, provided that they get the right class of officer, there is no trouble whatever with their discipline any more than with ours.

The correspondents noted that the American leaders were strongly averse from any useless sacrifice of their troops by sending them into action before they were thoroughly trained, but also faced the possibility that circumstances might make this sacrifice necessary.

From the moment when the Australians met the American forces they fraternised with a natural freedom hitherto seen only when they mingled with other dominion soldiers or with the Scots. Some wiseacres, acquainted with both peoples, had prophesied exciting times when the Americans would march in announcing that they had come to "win the war"; the Diggers expected something of this, and their hair rose to meet it, but they found no trace of it. From the time of the first visits paid by American officers to the front in 1917, their British and dominion comrades noted precisely the opposite quality—the modesty and restraint of their talk. The point is referred to in several Australian records:

I have not heard yet a single American bragging about what they had done or were going to do (wrote one of the war correspondents).

⁴³ The Australian war correspondents had been much less deeply impressed by several of the American commanders and staff. "Colonel ——— struck me," says the same diary, "as being very similar to one of our elderly, somewhat fussy colonels with (some of) whom we began the war. . . . His adjutant was a man with a fat chin and rather lazy manner who, I should say, would last in active service just about a month. However, beside them was standing an orderly officer of the very finest type—evidently one of the newer promotions, a straight, keen, quiet chap of the sort that is going to make the success of the American Army." Pershing eventually weeded a number of older men from the front.

It is related that, on the arrival of the Americans in the Somme area, a Digger asked: "Are you going to win the war for us?" "Well," came the quick answer, "we hope we'll fight like the Australians."

At this time it occurred to General Rawlinson—Why not give the Americans experience of a model set-piece attack beside the highly-skilled Australians, and at the same time strengthen the Australian battalions by attaching to each of them a company of these fine looking troops? General Monash, on the matter being mentioned to him, apparently asked for "about 2,000 men organised in eight companies." Accordingly Rawlinson on June 25th, after obtaining Haig's approval, spoke to Maj.-General Read,⁴⁴ commanding the II American Army Corps, who represented the American Commander-in-Chief, General Pershing, in the administrative command of the 27th and 33rd Divisions. A few days later Rawlinson wrote to G.H.Q.:

Leave has been obtained from American G.H.Q. through the American II Corps to employ the equivalent of one battalion of American infantry. . . .

Meanwhile Read wrote to Maj.-General Bell,⁴⁵ the stalwart soldier who had organised and commanded the 33rd Division (Haig describes him as "a typical Yankee with a little goatee beard, and moustache"). Read's letter says:

The commanding general of the 4th British Army has requested of the corps commander that certain smaller units of your Division be permitted to take part in a raid of some kind which it is contemplated to make against the enemy some time in the near future.

General Read added that he approved

provided not more than the equivalent of one battalion be employed and that our troops participate as platoons or companies, each under the immediate command of its own officers. . . . The participation of these units . . . is considered valuable training for which due credit

⁴⁴ Maj.-Gen. G. W. Read, D.S.M. Commanded II American Corps, 1918-19. Officer of U.S. Regular Army; b. Indianola, Iowa, U.S.A., 19 Nov. 1860. (Was given order of K.C.B.) Died, 6 Nov. 1934.

⁴⁵ Maj.-Gen. G. Bell, jnr., D.S.M. Commanded 33rd Amer. Div., 1917-19. Officer of U.S. Regular Army; of Hagerstown, Maryland, U.S.A.; b. Fort McHenry, Maryland, 23 Jan. 1859. (Was given order of K.C.M.G.) Died 28 Oct. 1926.

may be taken, if accomplished, as part of the weekly schedule under Program of Training, G.H.Q., Phase A.⁴⁶

At a later time General Read obviously suspected that the project had been discussed by General Bell before it had been broached to him, for he asked Bell what prior conversation he had had with Rawlinson or any of his staff

relative to the readiness of your troops and your willingness to take part in such an operation.

Bell replied that he could not remember having discussed the subject with any one before the project was outlined to him by Read himself, and that certainly no arrangements had been made.⁴⁷

The proposal to employ American troops probably originated on June 22nd or 23rd, when Monash's first plans had been received and were being submitted to Haig; for Rawlinson, who by June 24th had fixed July 4th as the date of the attack, writes:

I selected the date of Independence Day as it was the first occasion on which American troops had taken part in an actual attack alongside our fellows. . . .⁴⁸

General Bell on June 29th chose two companies from each of the 131st and 132nd Regiments.⁴⁹ "There were great manifestations of joy," states Col. Sanborn's report, when the order for training with the Australians was received. "You will be fighting along with lads who always deliver the goods," said one American commander in sending off his troops. The selected companies of the 131st, after filling up to full strength—250 each—marched at once to the 11th Australian Brigade, then resting in the woods at Allonville, and those from the 132nd to the 4th Brigade, in bivouacs near the Somme bank near Aubigny. These Americans were completely new to con-

⁴⁶ See *The History of the 33rd Division, A.E.F.*, by Lt.-Col. F. L. Huidekoper, Vol. II, pp. 351, 425. Many of the documents relevant to the Hamel fighting, including the Australian war diaries, are printed in this carefully written and useful work.

⁴⁷ Accepting this as perfectly true, the reader may still conjecture that, before suggesting American participation, Rawlinson probably knew, from conversation with American soldiers or officers, that it would be welcomed by them.

⁴⁸ Monash says this was "partly" the reason. He had asked to attack that day in order to use the 11th Bde. (see p. 253n).

⁴⁹ These belonged, not to the 65th Bde., which was training with the Australians, but to the 66th, training with III Corps.

ditions at the front, and on the tiring night march to Allonville⁵⁰ the passing of German aeroplanes close overhead caused them to lie up along the roadside for several hours.

Monash, however, had been promised, not four companies but ten—one for each battalion in the attack. Clearly some misunderstanding had occurred, and, when on June 29th this was represented to General Read, he at once authorised the despatch of six more, which Bell sent on the 30th, selecting the remaining companies of the I and II Battalions of the 131st.⁵¹

The advent of the American reinforcement—particularly of the second instalment, which is described as “unexpected”—was naturally welcomed by the battalions of the 4th and 11th Brigades, whose own companies at battle strength, especially during the epidemic of “Spanish” influenza then raging, did not average much over 100 rifles. The 11th Brigade was much the weaker, having lost severely in the gas-shelling at Villers-Bretonneux at the time of the German offensive on the Aisne.⁵² Capt. Gale,⁵³ whose company went to the 42nd Battalion, records that Maj. Dibdin,⁵⁴ its acting commander,

advised me that his companies were small, his entire battalion being but little stronger than my company. To avoid a top heavy battalion, and in order that our men might “mix” more with the Australians and thereby learn more from these seasoned campaigners, we decided that

⁵⁰ For Capt. Carroll M. Gale’s company (“C”) of the 131st the march was an exceedingly trying one. Gale was a highly trusted commander and his company had that morning been sent forward from Pierregot in the back area to the reserve line of the III Corps. There he received an order to bring it back to Pierregot and report to General Bell, and also to bring it up to strength by absorbing a platoon of “D” Coy. At Pierregot Bell told him that four companies were being sent for a tour in the Australian line. “The Australians might let us take part in a show they were planning.” Gale was senior officer of the two companies from his regiment. He had to turn round again and march that night to Allonville, where he arrived at 2 next morning. The companies of the 132nd reached the 4th Bde. about 12.30 a.m. on June 30. One of their commanders, Capt. W. J. Masoner, notes that Lt.-Col. McSharry of the 15th Aust. Bn. “guided us to a reserve trench . . . and remained in our camp until all men had found sleeping places and dugouts.”

⁵¹ This was Col. Sanborn’s regiment. “C” and “E” Companies of the 131st had already been sent, as well as “A” and “G,” 132nd. The six now sent were the remainder of the I and II Bns. of the 131st—“A,” “B,” “D,” “F,” “G,” and “H” Companies. They marched in under their battalion commanders, Majs. H. E. Cheney and P. C. Gale, at about dusk, “A,” “B,” and “D” to the 11th Bde., “F,” “G,” and “H” to the 4th. Rawlinson informed G.H.Q. of this addition to the American detachment.

⁵² May 25-28. The 43rd Bn., for example, then suffered 230 casualties, and had since been organised in three companies each of three platoons.

⁵³ Maj. C. M. Gale, D.S.C., 131st Amer. Regt. Police Inspector; of Chicago, U.S.A.; b. Angola, Indiana, U.S.A., 25 May 1880.

⁵⁴ Lt.-Col. E. J. Dibdin, D.S.O., V.D.; 42nd Bn. Secretary; of Rockhampton, Q’land; b. Rockhampton, 4 Jan. 1886.

it would be much the best to detail our platoons one with each of the Australian companies.⁵⁵

The American Lieut. Rinkliff,⁵⁶ who with his platoon joined Capt. Warry's⁵⁷ company of the 42nd, records that its "actual strength" at the time was

three platoons of 20 to 26 men each, but all having the appearance of fighting men.

The method of distributing the Americans by platoons was almost universally adopted. But the difficulty of fitting elements of one army into another army—even when their material was closely similar—was realised when it was found that the American platoons were 60 strong, and divided into seven "squads," each under an N.C.O., instead of into four sections as with the British. The embarrassing size of the American companies was reduced by sending one-fifth of each of them—50 officers and men—back to the battalion reinforcement camps, which held a similar proportion of the Australian units.⁵⁸ The American companies joined the Australian battalions as follows:

⁵⁵ Extract from a trench newspaper published by Capt. Gale's company in 1919; obtained by courtesy of the American Battle Monuments' Commission. The strength of the 11th Bde.'s infantry (excluding some 350 detached or at schools etc.) at this time was:

| | Front line strength ("A" Echelon) | | Transport ("B" Echelon) | | Nucleus ("C" Echelon) | | Total | | Americans attached (5 coys.) | |
|----------|-----------------------------------|--------|-------------------------|--------|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|------------------------------|--------|
| | Offrs. | Others | Offrs. | Others | Offrs. | Others | Offrs. | Others | Offrs. | Others |
| 41st Bn. | 22 | 573 | 4 | 94 | 8 | 88 | 34 | 755 | 4 | 257 |
| 42nd Bn. | 23 | 410 | 3 | 79 | 3 | 68 | 29 | 557 | 9 | 367 |
| 43rd Bn. | 26 | 431 | 4 | 89 | 3 | 41 | 33 | 561 | 9 | 375 |
| 44th Bn. | 28 | 570 | 3 | 79 | 4 | 111 | 35 | 760 | 3 | 245 |
| Total | 99 | 1,984 | 14 | 341 | 18 | 308 | 131 | 2,633 | 25 | 1,244 |

The battalions of the 4th Bde., on the other hand, averaged about 900, of whom 100 were with the transport, etc., 125-250 with the nucleus, and some 550 in the front line. It will be noted that the Americans had proportionately far fewer officers than the Australians.

⁵⁶ Capt. F. L. Rinkliff, 131st Amer. Regt. Farmer; of Chillicothe, Ohio, U.S.A.; b. Ross County, Ohio, 26 Feb. 1889.

⁵⁷ Capt. S. R. Warry, M.C.; 42nd Bn. Commercial traveller; of Maryborough, Q'land; b. Maryborough, 4 Mar. 1884.

⁵⁸ The platoons retained for the fight were allotted as each Australian battalion commander decided. Thus in the 43rd (S. Aust.) Bn., the arrival of Capt. J. W. Luke's company ("E," 131st Regt.) enabled the battalion, which had long since been reduced to three companies of three platoons each, to reshuffle its platoons and re-establish its fourth company. Next day the allotment to it of two additional platoons from the second batch of Americans made it possible to increase all the companies to four platoons, and on this establishment its plan for the action was based. The 41st Bn. similarly re-established its fourth company.

| 11th Brigade | | | 4th Brigade | | 6th Brigade |
|---------------------|--|---------------------|---------------------|--|---------------------------------|
| Bn. | <i>Americans joined June 30 July 1</i> | | Bn. | <i>Americans joined June 29 July 1</i> | <i>Bn. Americans joined</i> |
| 42nd | C 131st* | $\frac{1}{2}$ D 131 | 15th | G 132 | 21st none |
| 43rd | E 131 | $\frac{1}{2}$ D 131 | 16th | G&H 131 | 23rd none |
| 44th | | B 131 | 13th | A 132 | |
| 41st (Re- serve) | | A 131 | 14th (Sup- port) | F 131 | |

* This company (Capt. Gale's) was at first split up between the 42nd and 44th, but on arrival of the second batch it was reunited with the 42nd.

Other Americans were attached as stretcher-bearers, intelligence men, and supernumeraries.

Great care had been taken by General Monash to keep the project secret; from June 18th till the 25th no one except the commanders of corps and divisions, and the higher tank leaders, were supposed to know of it. On that day the brigadiers were informed at MacLagan's conference, which moulded the general scheme; on the same day the brigadiers told the battalion commanders, and some of these⁵⁹ reconnoitred the front line from which they would attack. On the night of the 26th the 4th Brigade (4th Division), then holding the front opposite Hamel, was pulled out for a week's rest and training,⁶⁰ the 13th Brigade of the same division taking its place while the 12th remained on the left, astride of the Somme. On the 29th the 2nd Division took over from the 3rd the front at Villers-Bretonneux.⁶¹ On the same day the 11th Brigade (3rd Division), which had marched for a few days' rest to Allonville, and the 4th Brigade and 21st Battalion (6th Brigade) resting beside the Somme, each sent about a tenth of their men to practise—and picnic—with the new tanks at Vaux-en-Amienois, in a quiet valley north-west of Amiens.⁶²

With the arrival of the first American companies that night and next morning, and the exercises with them or with the

⁵⁹ And, in the 41st Bn., some of the company officers.

⁶⁰ The troops were somewhat soft after a tour in the front line and were therefore given physical training, swimming, and cricket.

⁶¹ The 5th Bde. took over the northern part of the line there, from which two battalions of the 6th Bde. were to attack.

⁶² The 4th and 11th Bdes. sent 200 men (50 from each battalion) and the 21st Bn. 90.

tanks next day, the secret, though still officially maintained, leaked quickly out, although time, place, and similar details were not generally known. The best safeguard at this stage was the care taken to preserve normal appearances—especially to stop all unusual movement by day and to camouflage all new earthworks.⁶³

The tank practices were regarded as vital by every one from Rawlinson downwards, and not least by officers and men of the Tank Corps. These were enthusiastic believers in their machines and were determined to dispel the Australians' well-known objections, based upon the performance of older tanks and less well trained and selected crews. In contrast with the Mark I tank,⁶⁴ which crawled at 2-3 miles an hour, took three men to drive, could not move backwards, had to stop before it could turn, and could be shot through by armour-piercing bullets, the men now watched the tanks moving almost as fast as running infantry, with their single drivers turning them swiftly in any direction, or backing them at will. Moreover these tanks were armoured against steel bullets. Sir John Monash has described the manoeuvres:

Set-piece manoeuvre exercises on the scale of a battalion were designed and rehearsed over and over again; red flags marked enemy machine-gun posts; real wire entanglements were laid out to show how easily the tanks could mow them down; real trenches were dug for the tanks to leap and straddle and search with fire; real rifle grenades were fired by the infantry to indicate to the tanks the enemy strong points which were molesting and impeding their advance. The tanks would throw themselves upon these places, and, pirouetting round and round, would blot them out, much as a man's heel would crush a scorpion.⁶⁵

The tank officers (says the diary of the 6th Australian Infantry Brigade) explained that their machines, being higher

⁶³ Lt.-Col. Harry Murray, commanding the 4th Aust. Machine Gun Bn., for example, records that, in order to avoid concentrated movement on the last few days, sites near Bouzencourt for the 8 machine-gun batteries (each of four guns, to fire in enfilade from the north) were chosen by June 26, and the camouflage netting and 500,000 rounds of ammunition had been brought up by the night of the 28th. By the 30th the posts had been dug and covered with netting, and 8,000 rounds, a tin of water, and a base for the tripod were in position at each. It had been necessary to employ 60 teams for the transport, but excessive movement on the later nights had there been prevented.

⁶⁴ Mark I was the tank employed on the Somme (in early days it had a wheeled tail) and at Bullecourt. Mark IV, an improved tank of the same type, with bullet-proof armour and a less dangerously placed petrol tank, began to reach France on 22 Apr. 1917, and was used at Messines. Mark V first arrived on 23 Mar. 1918. Mark VIII—the "Allies' Tank," a joint production of British, French, and Americans—was to arrive during the winter of 1918-19.

⁶⁵ *The Australian Victories in France in 1918*, pp. 49-50. In these practices the artillery barrage was, as usual, represented by a line of men carrying flags.

than a man, could not keep so close to the barrage as the infantry. Now that the plan provided for a barrage, therefore, the tanks followed close behind the infantry, ready to deal with any resistance that checked the advance. In the intervals between the rehearsals, Sir John says,

the tanks kept open house . . . the infantry were taken over the field for "joy rides," were allowed to clamber all over the monsters, inside and out, and even to help to drive them and put them through their paces. Platoon and company leaders met dozens of tank officers face to face and they argued each other to a standstill upon every aspect that arose. . . . The fame of the tanks, and all the wonderful things they could do, spread rapidly throughout the Corps. The "Digger" took the tank to his heart and, ever after, each tank was given a pet name by the company of infantry which it served in battle, a name which was kept chalked on its iron sides, together with a panegyric commenting upon its prowess.

This does not overstate the general result. Even those companies of the 11th Brigade that had to march the twelve miles⁶⁶ from Allonville and back considered the demonstration well worth it. A second rehearsal, on June 30th, was attended by similar parties including a number of the Americans. Next day many of the tank officers came up to the bivouacs of the battalions with whom they were serving, and not merely discussed the plans but lived and messed with the Australian officers, establishing friendship and mutual understanding. In addition, despite the danger to tanks from the barrage, Col. Bingham issued for them the instruction:

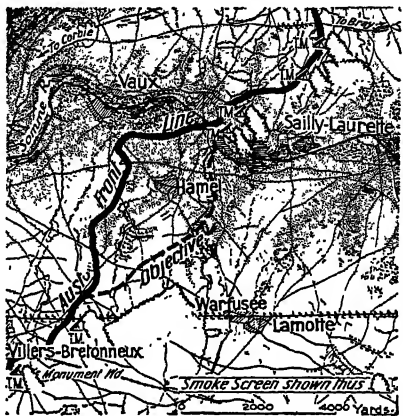
It is the primary duty of the tanks to save casualties to the Australian infantry, and this cannot be done so long as tanks remain in rear of them. Tank commanders must do their utmost to get in between the infantry and the artillery barrage whenever possible.

Meanwhile the plan had been thrashed out at a number of conferences. Monash presided at one of these on June 28th, at which an agenda of 118 items drawn up by himself was discussed, and finally at a larger conference of leaders, including brigadiers and commanders of tank battalion, air squadrons, and other co-operating units, at corps headquarters on June 30th. At this he worked through an agenda of 133 items, separating matters settled from those still to be settled, and so determining the latter that no alteration would be needed or allowed. The conference habit was spreading—each brigade and most battalions held similar meetings at which they worked

⁶⁶ Most of the troops were carried by 'bus.

through carefully drawn agenda in discussion with the tank, flying corps, artillery, machine-gun, and other officers who would be acting with them in the battle. A special meeting of intelligence officers, to arrange for the distribution of information and for a thorough search for intelligence from prisoners and documents on the battleground, was held under Maj. Hunn,⁶⁷ the enthusiastic young chief of that branch of the corps staff. Differently from his arrangement at Messines, Monash left the tactics for reducing the main obstacles almost entirely in the hands of the brigadiers and battalion commanders who would have to tackle them. He insisted that the tanks must not merely be allotted to the several attacking infantry units, but, during the action, must be under the orders of the infantry commanders to whose troops they were attached. Naturally this proposal brought objection from the tank commanders, but Monash met their point by a clear ruling that the infantry commander on the spot was to control the joint action of tanks and infantry but not to interfere with the general plan. The tank commanders accepted this with admirable loyalty: Col. Bingham's order to his officers, placing them temporarily under the infantry leaders, did not even mention the restriction.

As a result of this profuse elaboration, by discussion rather than written orders,⁶⁸ the most complete preparations were



The Smoke Screens.

T.M. signifies "thrown by trench mortars." The barrage also would contain smoke and would continue for two hours.

⁶⁷ Maj. S. A. Hunn, O.B.E., M.V.O., M.C.; 32nd Bn. G.S.O. (3), 5th Aust. Div., 1917-18; G.S.O. (3), Aust. Corps, 1918-19. Wool-broker; of Kent Town, S. Aust.; b. Strathalbyn, S. Aust., 31 Oct. 1889. Died 23 Feb. 1942.

⁶⁸ Br.-Gen. Cannan, however, expressed the opinion that there were too many written instructions, and that they were issued too late, forcing the brigade staffs in self-protection to elaborate them and pass them on at a time when they might have been doing more useful work.

made, of which the following are of special interest. The beginning and end of the halt of the artillery barrage were to be marked by the field-guns firing entirely with smoke shell. The smoke screens on the flanks would be laid down partly by trench-mortars (operated by a special company of the Royal Engineers) and partly by 4.5-inch howitzers, and the screen south of Morlancourt would be laid at three different heights in order to blind observers at every altitude. But the smoke screens would be maintained only for two hours; consequently on part of the objective beyond Vaire Wood, where the ground was much exposed, the troops might find it difficult, under sniping, to get well dug in during the first day.

We have therefore had a 9.2-inch battery firing . . . making shell-holes for the infantry to lie in (said Monash on July 3). The battery has been firing in a desultory way at odd times in order to avoid arousing suspicion. We have had those shell-holes mapped and the infantry know where they are.

Annotated air-photographs of the battlefield were distributed in sufficient numbers to be given to the N.C.O's,⁶⁹ and several series of maps showing the lifts of the artillery barrage, the enemy organisations, and the trenches and objective, were issued in numbers greater even than at Third Ypres—Lieut.-Col. Marks of the 13th records that he had a "message map"⁷⁰ for every man. Ammunition for the Vickers machine-guns was to be carried after day-break by aeroplanes and dropped by parachutes at certain points, and also wherever a machine-gun detachment laid out on the crops a large "V" in white cloth.⁷¹ The place of many carrying parties would be taken by four carrier tanks,⁷² which would dump large loads at four fixed points close behind the objective, four infantrymen and an N.C.O. going with each to load and unload it. The reserve

⁶⁹ Also oblique air-photographs showing the woods, village, and trenches.

⁷⁰ That is, a small map of the battlefield with message forms already printed on the back of it. For example: "I am at"

⁷¹ The history of No. 3 Sqdn., A.F.C., states (p. 79) that this method had been suggested to Gen. Rawlinson by a captured German *communiqué*. After consultation with Br.-Gen. L. E. O. Charlton, experiments were conducted by the squadron in dropping boxes from the bomb racks. The box first thrown over the side broke loose and narrowly missed the wing and squadron commanders who were watching below. Maj. D. V. J. Blake then suggested a modification of the bomb racks. Capt. L. J. Wackett carried this out, and satisfied Rawlinson on June 24. No. 3 Squadron, however, had too many other tasks, and No. 9 (British) had to do this work in the battle. (Charlton belonged to Northumberland, Eng.; Blake to Parramatta, N.S.W.; Wackett to Townsville, Q'land.)

⁷² Originally designed to transport each a 60-pounder gun, but found more suitable for carrying stores.

battalions and a specially organised train of pack mules would, nevertheless, still be responsible for carrying other loads. As the attack would start in the early dawn, the infantry was apprehensive that the reserve and carrier tanks following behind the troops might crush the Australian and American wounded. Accordingly each reserve tank was to be accompanied by three infantrymen. Every fighting tank would be guided by an Australian scout. Every man in the attack carried white tape to be tied on the high crops, or on a rifle stuck in the ground, to mark the position of wounded men, and returning tanks, including the carriers, would help to bring back the wounded when possible.

Finally, in addition to the main action, there would be important diversions. The creeping barrage at "zero" would be laid down on the whole front of the 2nd Division on the right and along that of the 5th Division and III Corps on the left, and, under this, several minor attacks would be made. The most important would be at the northern end of the corps line, south of the Ancre, where Elliott's 15th Brigade (5th Division) would seize the German front line beyond Ville on a front of 1,200 yards. On the Morlancourt heights the 14th Brigade would raid the Germans near the Brick Beacon and carry out a dummy attack above Saily-Laurette. On the extreme right the 7th Brigade also was asked to raid, but Brig.-Genl. Wisdom preferred to capture part of the enemy front in extension of the attack by the 6th Brigade. Far away to the north, beyond Albert, the III Corps⁷³ would also lay down a smoke screen as if an attack was being launched there.

From the time of this conference no changes of plan were to be made. On July 1st the 11th Brigade, with its American platoons in place, practised the operation on the aerodrome at Allonville.⁷⁴ An officer of the 41st Battalion⁷⁵ noted that in this practice the drill of the American platoon attached to his company was "very smart and won the admiration of all ranks."

⁷³ Assisted by part of No. 1 Special Company, R.E., with trench-mortars.

⁷⁴ It practised the assembly, advance behind barrage (line of men 70 yards ahead with flags), ten minutes' halt, slower advance to objective, taking position on objective, and dispositions for defence at the objective two hours from the start. Arms were not carried—Lewis gunners were marked by white arm bands.

⁷⁵ Lt. J. J. Hanley, 41st Bn. Commonwealth public servant; of Brisbane; b. Fortitude Valley, Q'land, 23 Oct. 1894.

In the 42nd the acting adjutant, Capt. MacDonnell,⁷⁶ and some of the company commanders lectured the Americans on the operation. Meanwhile in the 4th Brigade the young commander of the 13th Battalion, Lieut.-Col. Marks, handed his Americans over to his bombing and Lewis gun officers and other specialists, and within three days made sure that they handled their weapons with sufficient skill. Moving by night the additional artillery⁷⁷ reached its waggon-lines by the morning of July 1st, and the nightly work of emplacing the batteries then began. Monash had laid it down that the artillery must, as far as possible, be off the roads before the last night, and consequently the night of July 2nd saw a great movement of guns towards the front.⁷⁸ The chosen battery positions had been camouflaged over with netting before digging began upon them, and aeroplanes were sent up daily to report whether unusual movement or other suspicious signs might be visible to enemy airmen. Each field battery that had to move up with a view to covering the final stage of the advance left in the old position two guns, which carried out all normal shooting until the last night, when they too moved up. The only artillery to change position on the last night was these rear sections, and an "army" brigade of Royal Horse Artillery (the 16th) which moved to the heights north of the Somme in order to pounce upon any movement visible from there. Each field battery was allowed to fire only a few ranging shots on the lines of the ten-minute halt and of the final protective barrage, and this had to be done under cover of the normal harassing fire from the guns in the old positions.

July 2nd was marked by another interesting incident—a visit of the Australian Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, and the Minister for the Navy, Joseph Cook, to the Australian Corps on their way to the meeting of the Supreme War Council. The visit was very suddenly arranged, but Sir John Monash contrived to let the ministers address representative gatherings of all the brigades to be engaged in the attack on Hamel. About 200 representatives of

⁷⁶ Capt. W. H. A. MacDonnell, 42nd Bn. Mining and metallurgical engineer; of Herberton, Q'land; b. Aramac, Q'land, 18 Jan. 1894. Killed in action, 3 July 1918.

⁷⁷ See p. 257.

⁷⁸ It was observed that the Germans bombed and shelled the back areas this night as if suspecting movement. (See *The Old Sixteenth*, by Capt. C. Longmore, p. 180.)

each brigade assembled in the woods near their various camps. Normally the troops were not enthusiastic about such visits owing to the unpunctuality of the visitors which often kept them waiting for hours. This time, however, such delays were avoided by careful arrangement.⁷⁹ The kernel of the Prime Minister's address was:

Your deeds, the history of this war, are the basis upon which the future nation of Australians will be brought up. You have fought to keep alive the ideal of freedom and to save Australia from the domination to which, if Germany won, we would certainly be subjected. While you are doing that abroad we pledge ourselves to look after your interests at home.

Sir Joseph Cook told each gathering that Australia had a fine repatriation scheme waiting for her troops—he believed they would find it to be the best that any country had drawn up.

No one who watched them could doubt the sincerity of these two speakers. For the Prime Minister the men of the A.I.F. were to become the grand passion of his political career; but they were more to him than that. An Australian who was present wrote:

While Joe (Sir J. Cook) was speaking Hughes, as often as not, lay at full length on the ground, looking into the faces of the soldiers and chewing a stalk of grass. He seemed wrapped up in the men, and was gazing into their faces all the time. I suppose that he was thinking to himself: "Within thirty-six hours these men will be out there advancing under the bursting shells, going straight into the thresh of the machine-guns . . . and here they are laughing at Joe's old jokes, wrapped up in his speech exactly as if they were on a picnic."

It was during this visit that Hughes at Monash's request consulted the divisional generals separately as to the A.I.F. command,⁸⁰ and was assured by nearly all that the present arrangement was best, Monash controlling the corps and Birdwood the administration of the A.I.F.

On July 2nd the infantry began its approach. Early in the

⁷⁹ The men were to rest and have their dinner until they were actually told that Mr. Hughes was on the way. As Monash was uncertain what hour this would be, he arranged to ring and give them a zero hour—the hour at which Mr. Hughes would start from headquarters. They all knew how long it would take for him to get round after that zero hour (the times being fixed by the corps staff) and were to make arrangements accordingly. One account adds: "This acted very well although we heard afterwards that one brigade was kept hanging on and off all day through some mistake—Mr. Hughes didn't visit it." The troops visited were 11th, 4th, and 6th Bdes., in that order, and the No. 3 Sqn., A.F.C.

⁸⁰ See p. 213.

afternoon the 11th Brigade marched from Allonville through Querrieu and thence beside the Hallue stream towards the Somme. There, at about 5 o'clock, the brigade halted as no further movement could be made until dusk. The men bathed, and were given a hot meal—a point noted in more than one American record—and maps and information about the enemy were distributed. At 9.45, in the dusk, the march was resumed,⁸¹ part of the brigade moving along the southern bank of the Somme, part along roads used also by some of the 4th Brigade. To help the traffic of the artillery and ammunition columns, nightly, from July 1st onwards, the 12th Field Company of Engineers placed a pontoon bridge across the Somme between Vaux and Vaire, and every morning, before daylight, demolished it.⁸² Nevertheless this night the roads were crowded with troops and vehicles moving. The men were heavily laden, and a diary of the 11th Brigade records that the march was a trying one. Two Americans also noted:⁸³

It was a hard march but our first experience, so we didn't complain.

Indeed the soldierly appearance of the Americans made it difficult for most observers to realise that they had never before heard a machine-gun fired in action, or seen the ground illuminated by German flares.

The men were given their first impression of war (write Lt. Rinkliff and Sgt. Gottwald⁸⁴) by a party of stretcher-bearers passing along the rear of our trenches carrying a wounded Australian.

In the 11th Brigade, which went into the line partly through a communication trench specially dug by infantry and pioneers, the three battalions destined for the attack relieved two battalions of the 12th and 13th Brigades.⁸⁵ The position was fairly crowded, but settling down in the cold night without

⁸¹ The 41st Bn. (reserve), however, stayed at Neuville for the night.

⁸² A bridge was also built for stretcher-bearers but not put into position until after dark on July 3. A camouflage bridge was also thrown across the river in order to draw the enemy's fire from the real bridges, but it was pulled down by a battery commander who considered that it drew fire on his guns. Spare barrel-piers were made ready beside each bridge, so that it could be quickly repaired. But the main work of the engineers was, probably, the formation of forward dumps of engineer stores by the 4th and 13th Fld. Coys.

⁸³ Sgts. W. J. Peters and H. L. Reece, 131st Infantry, in the *Sea Gale*.

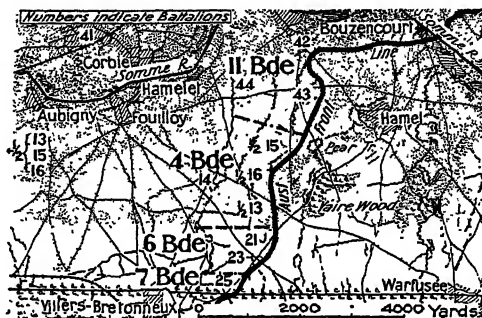
⁸⁴ Sgt. R. M. Gottwald (No. 1,165,588, 131st Amer. Inf. Regt.). Salesman; of Chicago, U.S.A.; b. Defiance, Ohio, 14 May 1891.

⁸⁵ The 45th and 51st respectively. They were relieved by the 42nd, 43rd, and 44th of the 11th Bde.

overcoats or blankets the troops obtained such rest as was possible. The Americans were naturally anxious about gas.

As none of us had ever smelt gas (says one account⁸⁶) we were not sure what it smelled like, but none were gassed during the night so we decided that we had some good gas guards in our platoon.

"In the morning," continues this narrative, "every one was up early to get a good look at the surrounding country although the enemy was in plain view about 1,000 yards away." A vital part of the plan, however, was that the troops should lie low this day, and some difficulty was found in getting these inexperienced men to realise the need. In the 14th Battalion, farther south, the same difficulty occurred until a German battery began to shell the area, and quickly brought about the desired stillness.⁸⁷



In the 4th Brigade, south of the 11th, in order to avoid a premature crowding of the front, only half the companies of each battalion moved to the forward trenches on this night. On the right, in the 2nd Division, the 6th Brigade with its 23rd and 21st Battalions in front line relieved the 5th. Before dawn on July 3rd the front was occupied by most of the troops that were to attack, and the pegs to mark the starting line had been put out by the intelligence officers and engineers. The tanks had come up to close assembly areas in the orchards around Aubigny, three miles behind the front line. It remained only for the force to lie low during the day and then, after the cutting of its own wire and laying of the tapes, to move forward to its starting lines and launch the assault.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ By Sgts. J. Brown and J. L. Waters, 131st Infantry, in the *Sea Gale*.

⁸⁷ Some of the American officers and N.C.O's were shown the country from observation points in the houses at Vaire.

⁸⁸ During the day, Capt. W. H. A. MacDonnell, adjutant of the 42nd, while standing outside the headquarters of his battalion with Maj. H. E. Cheney, the commander of the 1 Bn., 131st Amer. Inf., was killed by a shell, which also severely wounded Cheney.

Such was the position when, on the morning of July 3rd, the battalion staffs received orders that the six companies of Americans that had last joined were, by the wish of the American Commander-in-Chief, to be withdrawn. Later in the day it became known that there was serious question of pulling out the first four also. The Australian staffs were much worried—even the withdrawal already ordered meant a general disturbance at a late stage of the perfected arrangements. The movement entailed would be impossible before dusk, and would have to be promptly carried out then in order to clear the roads as far as possible for the forward movements of supplies and reserves. More than half the battalions must now rearrange their formations for the attack. In addition, the reduction of the force would be considerable—the 11th Brigade, for example, would attack with 2,200 men instead of nearly 3,000.

The regret of the Australians at losing their new friends was keen, but it was mild compared with the blow to the Americans. Their disappointment, says a report of the 42nd Battalion, "was unimaginable."

When the messenger arrived with the order to the (American) officers (writes Capt. Longmore in the history of the 16th Bn.⁸⁹) . . . they were dumbfounded. When they communicated its contents to their men, the latter were inclined to disobey the command. A violent discussion took place among them, and they came over and sat down among the 16th, who were then making their final dispositions. The officer in command of the Americans gave the 16th his men's best wishes and wished the battalion good luck. While he was speaking, the restraint with which his men held themselves was noticeable, and it could be seen that they were cut to the heart. . . .

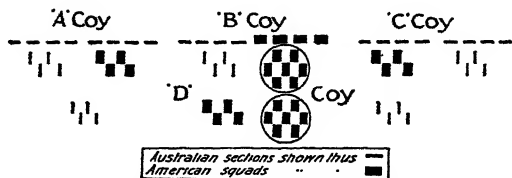
Many picturesque stories have been told of how numbers of the Americans of these companies hid themselves away, or disguised themselves in Australian uniforms, and so contrived to disobey the order and take part in the attack. It is probable that two or three did so,⁹⁰ but actually the Americans' discipline was too real and their earnestness too deep for such disorder as most of these rumours imply. The obvious and universal sympathy of the Australians helped them, and the order was accepted, however bitter.

The Australian battalions reorganised their arrangements

⁸⁹ *The Old Sixteenth*, p. 180.

⁹⁰ A report of the 42nd Bn. says that two men borrowed Australian tunics and managed to stay.

immediately. Some sent officers back to their nucleus camps to bring up additional men. Others simply closed up their ranks — the change of dispositions in the 43rd, for example, is shown in the marginal sketch. Meanwhile the question of withdrawing the four original companies was still under consideration. The reason for General Pershing's order was understood to be that his troops were insufficiently trained.



The withdrawn platoons are ringed. The companies affected (B and D) went in, each with three platoons.

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It happened that General Pershing spent the first two days of July visiting the II American Corps and the five divisions training in the British zone.⁹¹ Apparently he there learned for the first time of the projected employment of American troops.⁹² Pershing had fought hard, not only with the Allies but with his own government, for his fundamental and reasonable policy of preserving American troops, if possible, to fight as an American army on an American front, and, further, of endeavouring to ensure that they should be sufficiently trained before they were used in battle. Again and again he had had to resist all kinds of pleas and endeavours of French and British leaders, political and military, for the employment of the American forces on their fronts. He had willingly agreed that, in emergency, they could be used; subject to that proviso, the sector in which they would fight was to be determined by him when their training had been completed.

The operation at Hamel was no "emergency" and, Pershing writes, "the use of the Americans at this time was directly contrary to the arrangement" with the British. He therefore

⁹¹ On June 30 he had visited the 1st Div. in the neighbouring French Army.

⁹² Pershing (*My Experiences in the World War*, pp. 474-5) does not definitely say so, but merely, "on my first visit to the II Corps on July 2 I advised Read that our troops should not participate." It is difficult, however, to believe that, if he had heard of the project earlier, he would have allowed the preparations to go forward without immediate warning of his decision. Possibly American G.H.Q. had not informed him. As his decision was not intimated to Fourth Army until late on July 2, it may be inferred that either he visited Gen. Read's headquarters only at the last moment, or the importance of giving early notice to Rawlinson was not realised.

"advised General Read that our troops should not participate." He also told Rawlinson that he thought his troops were insufficiently trained and that he did not wish untrained troops to be used. In this quandary Rawlinson referred to the chief of Haig's staff, Lawrence, then with his chief at the Supreme War Council at Versailles. Haig appears to have instructed Lawrence that the whole American contingent should be withdrawn but the attack must proceed since it aimed at safeguarding the Villers-Bretonneux position.

Next day, when Haig called on Pershing in Paris, the American commander told him of his objections and Haig "entirely agreed."⁹³

I asked him (writes Haig) if he wished me to interfere in the matter, but he said "No," that all had been settled between him and Rawlinson.

Pershing now gave Read by telephone "further and positive instructions . . . that our troops should be withdrawn."

Possibly it was some lack of positiveness in Pershing's earlier directions, and the keenness of the local British and American commanders to use the troops, that had resulted in Rawlinson and Read's first arranging to withdraw only six companies.⁹⁴ At all events now, upon the positive order being passed to him by Read,⁹⁵ Rawlinson forthwith telephoned it to Monash, who happened to be on his rounds at headquarters of the 3rd Division. It was then about 4 on the afternoon of July 3rd, and the time for getting the order to the infantry and making a second readjustment of the formations was dangerously short. General MacLagan and the brigade commanders, when informed, vehemently opposed any further change. At Monash's request Rawlinson together with the chief of his staff, General Montgomery, motored to meet him at 5 o'clock at MacLagan's headquarters at Bussy-les-Daours.

It was certain that to acquiesce in the order at this stage would create much inconvenience and some risk of disorder besides weakening the attacking force, and Monash decided to

⁹³ See Pershing, *My Experiences in the World War*, p. 474. These were Haig's second thoughts. He had previously approved of the employment of Americans in the attack.

⁹⁴ Pershing says that Read had told Rawlinson "that I did not want partially trained troops to participate." Read and Rawlinson may have argued that the first four companies were better trained.

⁹⁵ Or possibly by Lawrence on return to G.H.Q.—the available records do not show which.

oppose it to the utmost. He told Rawlinson that it was already too late to carry it out;⁹⁶ that, if the Americans did not take part, the attack must be cancelled; that he therefore proposed to go on with them participating, unless Rawlinson expressly ordered him not to do so; and that, unless such an order arrived by 6.30 p.m., it would find the infantry and artillery already on the move to their battle stations and starting tapes. He further protested that the carrying out of the order might cause an "international incident." "No Australian," he said, "would ever fight beside an American again." Actually there was little fear of this, the feelings of the American troops themselves being too evident to arouse anything but general sympathy. Monash himself, however, believed it.

Rawlinson was very much upset (Monash told war correspondents the same evening⁹⁷). He wanted the fight to go on, "but you don't realise what it means—do you want me to run the risk of being sent back to England? Do you mean it is worth that?" "Yes, I do," said Monash. "It is more important to keep the confidence of the Americans and Australians in each other than to preserve even an Army Commander."

Rawlinson finally shouldered a heavy responsibility: if Haig did not countermand the attack before 6 o'clock, he said, it was to go forward. The time for this decision was afterwards extended to 6.30 and, later, to 7, which MacLagan said was the latest hour at which an order could issue if it was to reach some of his outposts.

Monash told us with a smile (says the diary above quoted) that General Haig . . . was in a motor car between Paris and G.H.Q. and was unlikely to be back by 7—so that it would apparently be all right.

Just before 7, however, the decision came:

Before dinner (says Haig's diary)⁹⁸ . . . Lawrence spoke to me regarding the Americans taking part in the Australian operations. . . . Some six companies had been withdrawn, about four could not be withdrawn; were the operations to be stopped in order to do so? I said, No. "The first essential is to improve our position east of Amiens as soon as possible. The attack must therefore be launched as prepared, even if a few American detachments cannot be got out before zero hour."

⁹⁶ *The Australian Victories in France*, p. 53. It is, however, inaccurate to say, as he there does, that "the whole of the infantry destined for the assault at dawn next morning, including those very Americans, was already well on its way to its battle stations."

⁹⁷ The quotation is from the diary of one of them. It was Monash's practice on the eve of an attack to give the Australian war correspondents and official photographer one of his wonderfully lucid expositions of the plan, a courtesy which they deeply appreciated.

⁹⁸ *Haig*, by Duff Cooper, Vol. II, p. 317.

CHAPTER IX

THE BATTLE OF HAMEL

THE night of July 3rd was particularly quiet, but was also extraordinarily interesting to any observer who knew what was going forward. At 6 p.m. telegrams had reached the Australian infantry battalions saying that the hour chosen for the attack was 3.10. Several of their commanders saw to it that, as well as their evening meal, the troops had a second hot meal, about midnight (a fact which the American soldiers again record with appreciation).¹ At 10.30 p.m. the tanks, with their engines throttled down, began to make the journey—roughly a mile—from Fouilloy and Hamelet to their assembly line half a mile behind the front, reaching it between 11.45 and 1.15. There they were met by guides from the infantry, who helped the tank section commanders to mark with tapes the tracks from there to the infantry battalions. Meanwhile parties from the infantry were out ahead cutting paths through their own wire or removing extensive lengths of it, while the intelligence officers and engineers laid the tapes. At various times between midnight and 1.45 the rear companies of the 4th Brigade reached the front, and at the same time the companies at the front filed out from the trenches on to their tapes.

The battlefield was partly open grassland, partly covered with deep crops. In one sector (as Capt. Gale noted) the tape "ran through waist-high wheat and clover fields." Even a veteran of so many battles as young Col. McSharry (15th Battalion) was deeply impressed by the silence and perfect

¹ Lt. Rinkliff (with the 42nd Bn.), for example, says: "Capt. Warry sent over a runner with the information that we were to get an additional hot meal before midnight, if possible." Sgts. Peters and Reece write: "At 9 p.m. . . . two patrols were sent out with Sgt. Scholes and one with Cpl. Philbin. Rations came up at midnight and we had a meal we enjoyed." The 42nd had a hot meal at 11 p.m. (Scholes was awarded the D.S.C. and the M.M. Philbin later became a captain in the Officers Reserve Corps).

order in which the troops filed "like shadows" to their places. Lieut. Dalziel² (43rd Battalion), attached to a platoon of American troops, reported that their wheel on to the tapes, also, was "excellent."

As we were lined up with our bayonets fixed (says the narrative of one American platoon) we all felt nervous . . . but, when we reached our position, we took our places, lay down and soon forgot we were to go over the top. . . . We were soon asleep.

Some battalions of the 11th Brigade, after aligning with their front wave on the tape, were withdrawn fifty yards in accordance with a last-minute message giving them leave to shift back a little until they were certain precisely where their own barrage would fall, as most of the guns had not been ranged. One or two companies were delayed by having to pass through an uncut section of their own wire; some of the Americans following a platoon of the 42nd noted that they themselves, with canvas gaiters, passed through this in half the time taken by the Diggers in puttees. By 3 o'clock the whole force was lying out on the grass and crop behind its tapes. Contrary to the usual practice in the Australian infantry, a warming tot of rum for each man was distributed during this wait.

At 3.2 a.m. the normal early morning harassing fire of the Australian artillery began. Gas, smoke, and high-explosive had been thrown at the enemy about that hour daily for a fortnight. At that moment the sixty tanks were to start at full speed on their last half-mile to the front line. As additional cover for their noise Monash had asked for a night-bombing air squadron to bomb Hamel and the valley behind it from 2.50 a.m. or earlier. Actually the No. 101 Squadron patrolled east of the Fourth Army's front from dusk to dawn, dropping 350 twenty-five pound bombs. Every pilot³ made at least three flights and two of them four.

What, during the night, could the Germans hear or see? One of a group of Australian observers who spent the whole night on the heights north of the Somme, on the look-out for any sight or sound, has written:

² Lt. A. H. Dalziel, M.C.; 43rd Bn. Motor bus company inspector; of Norwood, S. Aust.; b. Semaphore, S. Aust., 8 Nov. 1883.

³ A squadron comprised three flights each of six machines.

Below us (throughout the night) we could see faintly the lagoons and dark trees of the river. On the opposite slope all was very dark—only the outline of the plateau by Villers-Bretonneux against the misty grey of the sky. Every now and then a flare shot like a low rocket out of the woods or fields on the opposite hillside, sailed brilliantly to earth, and lay there dying faintly on the ground. Occasionally the swift whine and bang of a German field-gun pecking into the other side of the valley—you could see the little shell flash before you began to hear the noise. One of our planes began to drone up the valley in the dark.

The night was like the page of an open book. We lay on our backs listening to the drone of this plane, his wanderings and his return. The planes were to bomb all night at intervals on to the enemy infantry if they could find a safe target. Presently from the sky opposite there would shoot down a flare—he was searching for his target. Once or twice the flare fell through the clouds and descended slowly through them like some strange misty moon. At other times from the blackness of the sky high up there slanted a swift series of white sparks most deadly straight and swift. The airman was firing at them with his machine-gun . . . tracer bullets. Twice some plane wandered further over the enemy's line, and those strange strings of little white lights which the men call "strings of onions" were sent floating up by some German group far behind the lines. Four German searchlights began to feel the low clouds for him, moving restlessly in search of him like the eyes of a frightened snail. They shut off—he must have left them. We could not see his bombs, but later in the night dull red explosions on the plateau opposite must have been the bomb bursts from some plane which was still droning in the south.

It was one of the quietest nights I have ever seen on the front. Now and then a machine-gun chattered a few halting sentences. Once or twice our guns carried out their nightly strafe on to some sensitive point behind the German line. About 3 o'clock, when the sky was imperceptibly greying towards dawn, they broke out into the normal dawn bombardment—a spasmodic strafe of a shell or two from every gun.

The tanks started their engines three minutes before they moved. They would take twelve minutes in reaching the infantry, which they should do at 3.14 (four minutes after "zero"), when the barrage, after four minutes in full blast 200 yards out in No-Man's Land, began its advance.

"They can do it in the time," Sir John Monash had told the war correspondents. "We have tried them." He added that if they succeeded in this "the battle is over. . . . The only answer the enemy can make to this plan is to discover it, and put down a bombardment."

When the harassing fire started, at 3.2 a.m., the night of suspense was ended. It was certain that the Germans

had discovered nothing. Very few even of the waiting Australian infantry and none of the observers on the heights north of the Somme, straining their ears, had been able to catch any sound of the tanks. Once a few of the 15th Battalion did hear the noise of an engine—it came from a tank that had previously broken down, and consequently had to make the whole of its approach at full power. But the noise of bombing aeroplanes from about 10 p.m. onwards was continuous—as one 'plane receded another would be heard coming up to take its place. The racket of some was exceptional, old F.E. machines being used for certain tasks. The dropping of flares was intended to suggest that the British were searching for signs of a German offensive—indeed one account says that the pilots themselves believed this to be their real task.⁴ Once in the night a brilliant parachute flare, fired too far westwards, blazed out in the sky directly above the line of assembling tanks, and for a couple of torturing minutes hung there, showing up an area below as if vignetted in half-daylight. But this led to no discovery. One prisoner afterwards said that the continuous air operations did awaken suspicions in some German minds, but no precaution was taken, and certainly no one guessed that they were intended to cover tank sounds. Even after the war the historian of the 13th I.R. writing of this night says that the noticeable air activity "probably had the object of allowing the garrisons no rest."

The eight minutes' harassing bombardment, too, caused red S.O.S. flares to be fired at 3.3 opposite the southern flank of the attacking force.⁵ And in the centre, where the pear-shaped trench projected far up the crop-covered ridge close to the assembly line of the 4th Brigade, a German officer, afterwards captured, had heard the sound of men moving in the crop. "A wiring party," he thought at first; but, as the sounds continued, he suspected that a raid was being pre-

⁴ This, however, looks like the kind of story that was sometimes fondly believed at headquarters, but was hardly credible to any one acquainted with the manner in which news spread at the front.

⁵ The notes of one close observer suggest that this alarm may have been caused by the smoke bombs from trench-mortars on that flank opening at 3 o'clock instead of at 3.10 as ordered: "3 a.m. Smoke barrage. Is this right? 3.3 a.m. Two reds (German flares). Another red. Red again. More flares. Trench-mortar smoke. T.M. smoke has evidently started at 3. Reds all along line by Warfusée."

pared, and accordingly caused his troops to stand to their arms.

Even if the German artillery had been alarmed before zero hour, all the heavy artillery of the corps was ready to pounce upon and smother it, the rest of the guns proceeding with the plan when the time arrived. As it was, the batteries busy with the harassing bombardment⁶ gradually shortened their range until they were on the lines at which the creeping barrage was to begin; and then, with a sudden quickening of a dozen shots, the main barrage crashed down.⁷

Considering that so little ranging had been allowed, it was exceedingly accurate. The American, Capt. Gale, with the 42nd Battalion wrote after the war:

The barrage . . . was most wonderful; it surpassed even the great barrage of September 26th⁸ . . . the falling shells of the 18-pounders, exploding as they hit the ground, formed an almost straight line from the north edge of the action at the Somme to as far south as we could see.

Every field-gun and howitzer opened its fire with a smoke shell, whose brilliant cumulus was outlined by the pearly glow of the burst. The flanking smoke screens thrown by the artillery⁹ and by the mortars of No. 1 Special Company R.E., were exceedingly effective, except on the Roman road, where a number of the trench-mortar bombs burst behind the lines of the 7th Brigade. In front of the attacking troops the barrage lay almost as deep as at Messines—the 18-pounder shells 200 yards ahead of the infantry; those of the 4.5-inch howitzers 200 yards farther in front; those of eighty 6-inch and twenty 8- and 9.2-inch howitzers at least 200 yards beyond these again;

⁶ Firing smoke and high-explosive shell this morning *without gas*.

⁷ For a photograph of it *See Vol. XII, plate 501*.

⁸ In the Meuse-Argonne attack delivered by the First American and Second French Armies in which the 33rd Div. advanced 5.7 kilometres. Another post-war American account describes the Hamel barrage as "one of the most intense and accurate we have ever witnessed." "It was one thing that none of the boys who were present will ever forget," says a third.

⁹ The 103rd and 105th Howitzer Batteries and 15th Bty., A.F.A., fired smoke on the Morlancourt heights, and the 107th and 108th Howitzer Batteries, A.F.A., on the Warfusée heights. *See Vol. XII, plate 502*.

while the spare machine-guns of four divisions¹⁰ also sprayed the zone ahead, largely in enfilade. Along nearly the whole line the infantry at once rose and, lighting their cigarettes and with rifles slung, as if on a march, moved up to the line of shells which in four minutes would make its first jump. On the left, the barrage (says Capt. Gale)

was laid down so perfectly that we were able to approach it and follow it at about seventy-five yards, as ordered, without receiving any casualties from it.

Unfortunately such accuracy could hardly be universal with the artillery forced to rely so largely on map reading for its ranges. At perhaps half a dozen points one or more guns were firing short, particularly about the junction of the 4th and 11th Brigades, and here occurred the tragedy of the action. The first shells caught two sections of infantry as they waited in the crop—one of Americans and one of Lieut. Canaway's¹¹ platoon of the 43rd—together with part of company headquarters. Although their part of the line had, for safety, been withdrawn fifty yards from the tape, when the rest of the troops rose practically the whole of these men lay killed or wounded.¹² In the 15th Battalion next on the south, opposite Pear Trench, the same thing happened; as the battalion's left started to follow the barrage, of which most shots seemed to be falling 300 yards ahead, a dozen men were struck dead and thirty wounded. Such errors proved almost impossible to correct during the attack—the same guns continued to fire short at each stage up to the final objective; but, practised as they now were, the Australian infantry managed to avoid most of the later bursts from these guns. The 15th did this by holding back; but in the 43rd Lieut. Canaway kept his surviving men so close to the main barrage that the "shorts" exploded well behind them, the platoon thus making its advance between the two sets of shell-bursts. Everywhere the casualties from short shooting occurred chiefly at the start. The Australian infantry

¹⁰ Including one section from each company of the 3rd Div., three from the 8th M.G. Coy., 5th Div., as well as the 12th, 13th, and 24th M.G. Companies (4th M.G. Bn.) and part of the 2nd M.G. Bn.

¹¹ Lt. R. A. Canaway, M.C.; 43rd Bn. Clerk; of Hawthorn, S. Aust.; b. East Adelaide, 23 Nov. 1883.

¹² An American officer, Lt. E. R. Plummer (Chicago, U.S.A.; died 9 Jan. 1926), 131st Inf., U.S.N.G., was wounded.

knew that a proportion of such accidents was inevitable if they hugged the barrage as they had been trained to do, but they also knew that this was by far the safest course. Lieut.-Col. Drake Brockman (16th Battalion) expressed the general judgment when he reported the short shooting as "nothing beyond what is normally expected on these occasions."

At 3.14, when the barrage advanced, it was still almost completely dark¹³—much too dark for the tanks to move with comfort—and so far as can be ascertained not one of them had yet been seen or heard by the infantry when it began to follow the barrage. Whether a memory of Bullecourt raised in any mind in the 4th Brigade a passing apprehension that the tanks might again have failed, can only be conjectured—there is no word in any available record, public or private, to suggest it. Now, at any rate, the infantry had the cloud of smoke and of dust whipped by the barrage for protection, and the companies walked straight on into it. Along most of the line, especially at the centre and the southern flank, even the most experienced men soon found it difficult to discern the precise line of the barrage. On that dry ground the dust alone would have furnished more than sufficient screen; the addition of smoke shells made the haze so dense that, slowly floating southwards across the line of the advance, it soon hid all shell-bursts at ground level, and the line of the barrage could only be guessed from the flashes of shrapnel¹⁴ overhead. Little wonder that many of the Americans, who had landed in France only a few weeks before, were somewhat bewildered. In the 43rd Battalion the Americans forming part of Maj. Lott's¹⁵ company being, like the rest of these high spirited troops, anxious to outstrip the Australians, were dashing straight into the barrage, when (says one account)

Maj. Lott spoke to them and pulled them back. Next time they didn't start. Maj. Lott said: "How about going on with the fight?" "What, has the barrage gone on?" they said. It had gone on half a minute.

¹³ The true time was 2.14, daylight saving being in operation.

¹⁴ Every second shell of the field-guns at this stage was shrapnel. The percentage was: from start to 10-minutes halt line—10 per cent smoke, 40 per cent high-explosive (three quarters of these with instantaneous fuses), 50 per cent shrapnel; from 10-minutes halt to final objective—10 per cent smoke, 15 per cent high-explosive (none instantaneous), 75 per cent shrapnel. The 4.5-inch howitzers fired 10 per cent of smoke shell.

¹⁵ Maj. A. W. Lott, 43rd Bn. School teacher, of Semaphore, S. Aust.; b. Burra, S. Aust., 6 Mar. 1887.

An American quoted in the same narrative said that thenceforth

we just watched the line beside us. When they went on, we went on—we knew we were right so long as we were in line with them.

The keenness of the Americans to be not an inch behind the experienced troops raised a constant risk of their coming under fire of their own artillery and was a source of anxiety throughout; most of their casualties are said to have been thus caused. At least one Australian, Corpl. Roach¹⁶ of the 13th, lost his life by himself running into the barrage in order to turn back an American platoon that was entering it. Sergt. Darke¹⁷ of the same battalion, who on an American officer being wounded, took over his platoon, performed a similar action but came through unhurt.

The haze, in which the battalions could advance only blindly, guided on the flank by officers with compasses, created greater difficulty for the tanks. The hour of the advance was earlier than the Tank Corps desired, and the dark was so much increased by the smoke that some tanks found it impossible at the outset to be sure of their proper direction. This led to the hardest fighting in the battle. On the left of the 15th Battalion,¹⁸ where the short shooting of a number of guns made it impossible to get nearer than 200 yards to the main barrage, Capt. Carter's¹⁹ company was following the first lift when it saw men standing up in the mist ahead throwing bombs. At the same time machine-gun bullets from the front began to strike among Carter's troops. As the line rushed these German bombers it reached a belt of wire protecting Pear Trench. The barrage had skipped this wire, falling first west of it and then east of both the entanglement and the trench. The entanglement—rolls of concertina wire in front and barbed-

¹⁶ Cpl. M. J. Roach (No. 7063; 13th Bn.). Labourer; of Copeton, N.S.W.; b. Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, 17 Jan. 1895. Died of wounds, 5 July 1918.

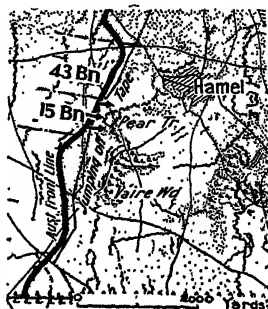
¹⁷ Lt. F. J. Darke, M.M., 13th Bn. Coach trimmer; of Granville, N.S.W.; b. Campbelltown, N.S.W., 9 Sep. 1898.

¹⁸ In the 15th the Americans were distributed, not, as ordered, by platoons, but by sections. The decision to do this was Col. McSharry's. There was no wiser head in the force, and the action was therefore probably justified.

¹⁹ Capt. E. K. Carter, M.C.; 15th Bn. Watchmaker; of Toowong, Q'land, b. Toowong, 4 Mar. 1895. Died 10 Feb. 1936.

wire behind—was not impassable; some men scrambled through, some climbed over. But it rendered very difficult any progress under fire of the machine-guns, which could now be discerned shooting from the trench ahead. Carter had both legs broken. The troops, many of whom were hit, threw themselves down while the Lewis gunners opened fire on the German guns. The companies on the flanks had pushed farther ahead, but they too were checked by heavy fire from machine-guns. Capt. Glasgow²⁰ on the right with Lieut. Dwyer²¹ saved many lives by wise control of the troops at this point.

Pear Trench, from which the fire came, was one of the three main recognised obstacles and three tanks had been allotted specially to assist the left of the 15th in overcoming it. Now was the time for the infantry to lie down and summon the tanks, which should be close behind them, to roll over the obstacle. But as no tank was in sight the infantry grappled with the difficulty in its usual manner. The companies on the flanks, though themselves enfiladed by machine-guns, managed to work ahead. Each Australian platoon had now two Lewis guns,²² and it was found that the gunners by firing these from the hip over the tall crops could silence or at least hamper the German machine-gunners.²³ Carter's gunners having silenced the two German machine-guns in their front his men at once rushed these. As they did so a third machine-gun opened close on the left. One Lewis gunner, a boy named Dalziel,²⁴ whose mate—the only other unwounded man of the gun-team—was firing, clapped another drum of



The Sketch shows the relative positions of the 15th and 43rd Battalions attacking at Pear Trench.

²⁰ Capt. R. Glasgow, D.S.O., M.C.; 15th Bn. Station hand; of Gympie, Q'land, b. Gympie, 8 Dec. 1887.

²¹ Lt. J. J. Dwyer, V.C.; 4th M.G. Coy. Labourer; of Alonnah, South Bruny Island, Tas.; b. Cygnet, Tas., 9 Mar. 1890.

²² This provision was now general in the B.E.F.

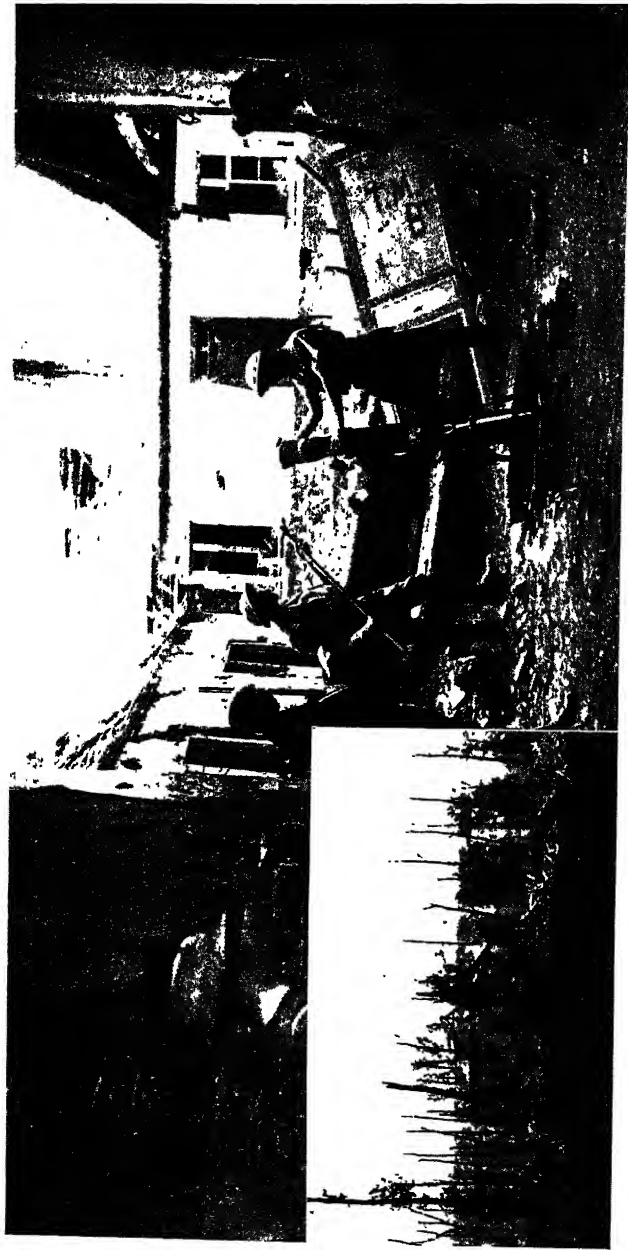
²³ In some cases one gunner fired from the hip while the man with the other gun set up his weapon on suitable ground.

²⁴ Sgt. H. Dalziel, V.C.; (No. 1936; 15th Bn.). Railway fireman; of Atherton, Q'land; b. Irvinebank, Q'land, 18 Feb. 1893.



15. PEAR TRENCH AND THE WOODS, HAMEL

Photographed on the morning of the battle. The view is down the slope to Pear Trench (whose chalk parapets can be seen on the left). On the farther slope are (from the right) Hamel, Vaire and Accroche Woods, the last-named lying on the left centre of the horizon above the two ammunition-parachutes. The objective ran between Accroche and Vaire Woods.



16. A NEWTON MORTAR FIRING FROM VILLE

17. *Inset:* Mill on the Ancre captured by Lieut. Thompson's platoon, 58th Battalion, 4th July, 1918. Note the wire through the marshes. The distant hill is behind Morlancourt.

Anst. War Memorial Official Photos Nos E2429 and (Inset) E2710

cartridges upon his comrade's gun, and then, drawing his revolver, rushed the German machine-gunners, shooting two and capturing the post.²⁵

Meanwhile the flanks had made good headway.

We kept on advancing (wrote an American, Capt. Masoner²⁶) and when we arrived close to their lines the Boche came running from their positions with their hands over their heads calling "Kamerad."

Immediately north of the Pear the southern flank of the 11th Brigade had been met by the same resistance. A machine-gun killed Lieut. Brook,²⁷ leading the flank platoon of Capt. Sexton's²⁸ company, 43rd Battalion, and the platoon was stopped. But a Lewis gunner, a farmer of the Yorke Peninsula named Shaw,²⁹ and an American corporal, H. G. Zyburt,³⁰ at once made for the post, Shaw firing his gun from the hip at the machine-gunners. This enabled Zyburt to rush in and bayonet three of the crew, and the obstacle was thus overcome. To the north of this again was Lieut. Canaway of the 43rd, who had directed his platoon to inform him as soon as any man reached the German wire. The report duly came, shouted from man to man along the line. Thus warned that the German trench was close ahead, the platoon made its rush. Canaway himself leapt the trench, shooting a German N.C.O. who came at him. The men of the garrison were too surprised even to hold up their hands, and four machine-guns were captured there with their covers on them.

By such methods the flanks pushed past Pear Trench, and the centre entered it. It was thronged with Germans with

²⁵ One young German Dalziel spared, because the youngster fought so well. Dalziel himself had his trigger finger shot away, and was ordered to the rear, but at the final objective he was found to have followed up the attack. He was again ordered to the aid-post, but instead was bringing up ammunition dropped by an aeroplane when he was shot through the head. For his work this day he was awarded the Victoria Cross. He was from the Atherton tableland in Q'land, and had discovered the Dalziel gold-mine.

²⁶ Capt. W. J. Masoner, 132nd Amer. Inf. Regt. Steamfitter; of Chicago, U.S.A.; b. Chicago, 17 Oct. 1888.

²⁷ Lt. F. R. Brook, 43rd Bn. Carpenter; of Prospect, S. Aust.; b. Richmond, S. Aust., 18 Feb. 1883. Killed in action, 4 July 1918.

²⁸ Maj. R. C. Sexton; 43rd Bn. Bank clerk; of Croydon, S. Aust.; b. Norwood, S. Aust., 7 Sep. 1892.

²⁹ Cpl. F. M. Shaw, D.C.M. (No. 577; 43rd Bn.). Farmer; of Weetulta, Yorke Peninsula, S. Aust.; b. Hobart, 7 May 1895. Died of wounds, 12 Aug. 1918.

³⁰ Cpl. H. G. Zyburt, (No. 1,387,270; 131st Amer. Inf. Regt.). Meter tester; of Chicago, U.S.A.; b. Chicago, 18 May 1897. (Was awarded M.M. He was wounded on this day, and again on Oct. 10.)

many machine-guns and contained camouflaged positions for trench-mortars.³¹ Its rear trench, seventy yards farther on, was also held. At least one German machine-gunner continued to fire until the troops actually reached him, and, although some of the enemy had held up their hands, others behind continued to throw bombs. As often happened, in the heat of the moment, this action appeared to be rank treachery,³² and the Queenslanders, whose own losses had been heavy, killed right and left in both the trench and the sunken road that ran through the redoubt. "I counted 40 (German dead) in a very small sector," records an American, Capt. Mallon.³³ Having quickly cleared the place,³⁴ the troops went on to catch up the barrage which had moved far ahead. As several Americans in various parts of the front noted, there was by now "no regular formation," "just one single line," "the men walking across sometimes in line, sometimes in small groups." Fortunately, where the 15th had lost the barrage no more direct opposition was now met with,³⁵ and the battalion reached the ten-minutes halt line without further difficulty. At this stage its tanks came up.

The second expected obstacle, Vaire and Hamel Woods, lay in front of the battalion next on the south, the 16th, and beyond the valley. As the Western Australians followed the barrage up the farther slope they were fired on, first from the German front line along the terraces immediately before Vaire Wood. Near the top of this slope was a redoubt, sometimes known as "Kidney Trench," similar in shape to the Pear.³⁶ Most of the

**The
Woods**

³¹ For a photograph of one see *Vol. XII, plate 504*.

³² Actually, of course, men were under no obligation to cease fire because some of their mates surrendered, and those who fought on were often the better men.

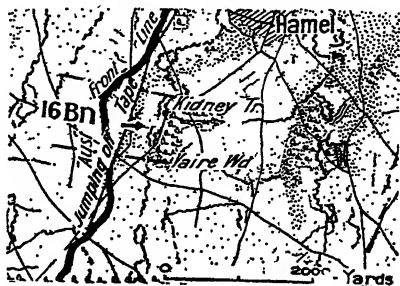
³³ Capt. G. H. Mallon, M. of H.; 132nd Amer. Inf. Regt. Sprinkler fitter; of Kansas City, U.S.A.; b. Ogden, Kansas, 15 June 1877. Died 2 Aug. 1934.

³⁴ Col. McSharry placed his headquarters there, and Maj. B. C. Kennedy (Sydney; died 14 Mar. 1928), the medical officer of the 15th, his aid-post. With Kennedy was an American, Lt. F. E. Schram (Chicago, U.S.A.). McSharry found a number of Germans in the trench-mortar pits, feigning death. When he threw some earth at them, they got up and surrendered. (Schram was awarded the M.C.)

³⁵ Just beyond the battalion's northern flank, however, a machine-gun opened. Cpl. S. H. Krantz (Perth, W. Aust.) of the 43rd Bn. asked a Lewis gunner of the 15th to keep it under fire, and then he and an American rushed it and bayoneted the crew.

³⁶ In some reports it was mistakenly called "Pear Trench."

16th's front wave was able to pass through the wire, but at this point, as the wire was reached, a machine-gun opened, mortally wounding the company commander, Capt. Woods,³⁷ and his sergeant-major, H. G. Blinman,³⁸ and annihilating a Lewis gun team. A lance-corporal, T. L. Axford,³⁹ at once rushed to the front, threw his bombs among the machine-gun crew, and jumped into the trench, killing ten Germans and capturing six. He then threw the machine-gun on to the parapet and called to the platoon to come on, which it did.⁴⁰ In a sunken road behind Kidney Trench were dugouts



Direction of 16th Battalion's attack.

from one of which 47 prisoners were taken.⁴¹ Both the 16th Battalion and the 14th, which followed it, remarked that many of the Germans in this area were, as General Monash had hoped, wearing gas-masks. "This, of course," wrote Col. Drake Brockman, "made the task of dealing with them very much easier." Many were very young and small.

The 16th Battalion had attacked with only half the force that at one time had been allotted to capture the wood, since both its attached companies of Americans, 500 men in all, had been withdrawn on the previous evening. But its four companies of determined men forced their way abreast through the undergrowth. It was found that tanks could penetrate the wood by the main "ride," but progress was hampered by the trees, and here the 16th was helped by the slow advance of the

³⁷ Capt. F. F. Woods, 16th Bn. Miner; of Broken Hill, N.S.W.; b. Long Ditton, Surrey, Eng., 1883. Died of wounds, 4 July 1918.

³⁸ C.S.M. H. G. Blinman (No. 1457; 16th Bn.). Commercial traveller; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. Adelaide, 30 Mar. 1884. Died of wounds, 4 July 1918.

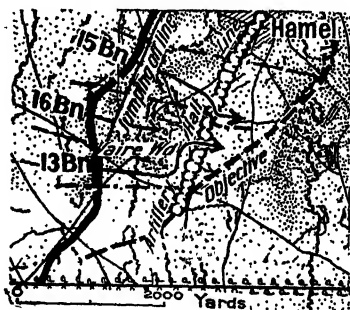
³⁹ Cpl. T. L. Axford, V.C., M.M. (No. 3399; 16th Bn.). Labourer; of Coolgardie, W. Aust.; b. Carrieton, S. Aust., 18 June 1894.

⁴⁰ For this action Axford received the Victoria Cross. A little farther north Lt. H. E. Blee (Payneham, S. Aust.) was mortally wounded. He, Woods, and Blinman had all been company sergeant-majors of the same company, and all were buried in the same grave.

⁴¹ A battery of trench-mortars also was captured there.

barrage—in some other parts both tanks and infantry would have preferred it to advance more rapidly. Capt. Woods's company was magnificently led by Lieut. Minchin,⁴² a Western Australian farmer—formerly a private of the 16th, and once a company cook, but now one of the outstanding leaders of an outstanding battalion. Practically the whole line, riflemen and Lewis gunners, fired from the hip as it advanced, driving the fleeing enemy into the barrage. At the north-eastern corner of Hamel Wood the headquarters of some German company fought toughly, manning its position with stretcher-bearers, orderlies, and a reserve platoon. Capt. Lynas—another outstanding leader, who had been wounded at the start but would not leave the fight—now signalled for a tank to assist; but at that moment a phosphorus bomb set fire to the dugout occupied by the Germans and incinerated a number of them.⁴³

The task of the 16th was thoroughly to clear the woods. Having done so, the battalion would move back into reserve; the final objective—the farther edge of the spur, 500-800 yards beyond—would be seized mainly by the 13th (N.S. Wales) Battalion, which must double round the southern end of the wood, and then up behind it while the barrage waited on the halt line. The right of the 15th would meet it, coming from the other direction, after brushing past the north of the wood. The 13th advanced with one company leading—so that the other three should, if possible, be unengaged until the southern end of the wood was passed⁴⁴ There the leading company would dig in, while two behind it would run northward as fast as possible and the fourth would



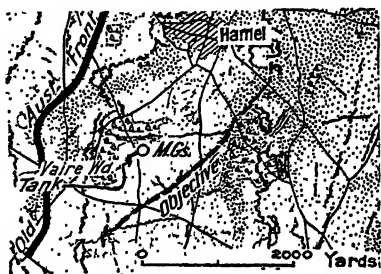
4th Brigade's assault.

⁴² Lt. J. B. Minchin, D.S.O., M.C.; 16th Bn. Farmer; of Balkuling, W. Aust.; b. Middle Swan, W. Aust., 15 June 1894. Died 1 Nov. 1936.

⁴³ Near the fork in the road on the southern edge of Hamel Wood three machine-guns were taken after a short fight, and on the eastern branch of the road two more.

⁴⁴ One section of each, however, was to finish mopping-up Germans, if necessary.

go straight on. The battalion cleared a few posts before it drew level with the wood, notably at the second of the two quarries there.⁴⁵ The men of the extending companies had been told to take their tactics from Rugby football, looking upon Vaire Wood as a scrum, their task being to double round it like the scrum half-back and make for the corner 500 yards to the north, where they would turn east and advance in line again. Capt. Marper⁴⁶ was leading the northward rush when fire was opened on his party from a neighbouring post held by a group of determined men. Marper charged it, shot three of the enemy, and captured their machine-gun. He then ran on with his company and was just turning eastwards to complete the manoeuvre when, very close ahead, was seen a carefully camouflaged trench, so well hidden that it had not been detected on the air-photographs. In this were Germans with two machine-guns who now opened fire. By then it was daylight, and nearly every company of the infantry found a tank somewhere within sight and call, exploring to see where it could be of use. The three tanks with the 13th Battalion had caught up the infantry at the first lift of the barrage. As they passed south of the wood, one of them, pressing forward in the edge of the barrage, was struck by a high-explosive shell which killed the Australian scout, Pte. Parrish,⁴⁷ who was guiding it from the conning tower, and put it out of action. But the two others were still pressing on and, when Marper's company was forced to ground by the machine-guns in the camouflaged trench, one tank (with the 13th Battalion colours painted on it) was seen waddling up fifty



⁴⁵ Within fourteen minutes of the start Lt.-Col. Marks heard (by means of a most efficient German field telephone, captured in a previous fight) that his men were digging at the second quarry.

⁴⁶ Capt. G. Marper, D.S.O.; 13th Bn. Hospital warder; of Rydalmere, N.S.W.; b. Sheffield, Eng., 27 Mar. 1891. (One of Harry Murray's old N.C.O's, promoted during the fighting at Mouquet Farm, in Aug. 1916.)

⁴⁷ Pte. T. Parrish (No. 3770; 13th Bn.). Colliery employee; of Boolaroo, N.S.W.; b. South Wales, 1898. Killed in action, 4 July 1918. (His brother, Pte. Joseph Parrish, had died of wounds in the previous week.)

yards in rear. Marper ran to the front of it, waving his arm in the direction of the trench. The machine-guns shot him through chest and arm, but the tank turned and made for the trench. One machine-gun position it trampled on; the Germans in the other gave up the fight, and the infantry came up and made them prisoners.

The 16th Battalion was then in the wood, in rear, clearing it of the enemy. The 15th was hidden by its northern horn. But when Marper, having seen the trench taken, handed over command to Lieut. Dwyer,⁴⁸ the second main obstacle—the woods—had been overcome.

The third expected obstacle, Hamel, lay in front of the northern brigade, the 11th, and was to be taken and mopped-up by the 43rd Battalion (South Australia) while the 44th (Western Australia), split in two halves, moved past each side of it. A great many tanks had been allotted to this section of the front, six to the 43rd for clearing Hamel and its outskirts; three to each half of the 44th; three to support the platoon (two sections of 43rd Battalion and two of 15th)⁴⁹ that was ensuring connection between the two brigades; six following in support to replace in the final stage of the advance the six that were attacking Hamel; three more allotted to the left company of the 15th to clear the pear-shaped trench; and six following in reserve. This arrangement ensured the presence of some thirty tanks at the call of the infantry in the central area, where the advance was deepest.

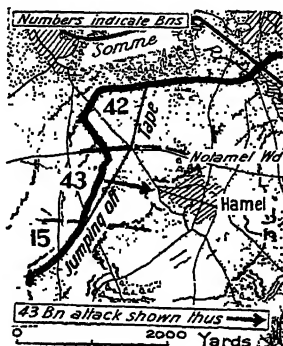
The three tanks for Pear Trench missed that position in the dark,⁵⁰ and the right of the 43rd, like the left of the 15th, became involved in heavy fighting and lost the barrage at this stage. On the front of the 43rd the first German trench-system ran north-eastwards, and consequently on the battalion's left No-Man's Land was nearly 1,000 yards wide. It was not until a quarter of an hour from the start that the centre com-

⁴⁸ Lt. T. Dwyer, M.C.; 13th Bn. Departmental manager; of Kogarah, N.S.W.; b. Sutherland, N.S.W., 27 June 1896.

⁴⁹ In this fight each battalion had a section in the next battalion's territory—the two sections combining to form the junction. The 4th and 11th Bdes. were linked by a body of twice this strength. In the German Army a *liaison* force (*Nachkommando*) was regularly allotted to ensure contact.

⁵⁰ Pear Trench, on a curve of the forward slope, was hard to find.

pany (Capt. Cope⁵¹) struck serious resistance at the point where the German defences bent round the western end of Hamel. The dust and smoke haze still clouded the village, but against the glare of a blazing house the Germans in the front line, who had fired a few shots, could be seen running to the rear. Cope's line swept on, but about 100 yards from the village a shot followed by a flare came from a low heap of mangel-wurzels south of the road. In this sector the tanks had not yet been sighted, and there followed a sharp infantry fight, the Australians lying down, shooting and bowling bombs, most of which, however, rolled down the front of the mound and exploded harmlessly. The figures of the enemy were sharply outlined against the glare of the burning village. Capt. Cope told Lieut. Symons,⁵² who was close by, attached to a platoon of Americans, to outflank the German position by leading forward his Americans along the road. This Symons did, and a rush was then made from all sides; 15 Germans were killed and about 40, mainly in a dugout behind the heap, were captured. Symons was wounded, but his messenger, Pte. Anderson,⁵³ the only other experienced man with these Americans, at once took charge and led the platoon until Hamel had been cleared.



North of the village the German front line lay through the small Notamel Wood, and was held in some strength. In the dense smoke the troops approaching this at first lost direction; but by very close observation the tops of the trees were distinguished in the flashes of the shells, and Capt. Moran⁵⁴ of the left company, 44 years of age and freshly arrived from

⁵¹ Capt. H. S. Cope, M.C.; 43rd Bn. Carriage builder; of Mt. Gambier, S. Aust.; b. Mt. Barker, S. Aust., 21 Feb. 1882. Died 11 Jan. 1928.

⁵² Lt. (T/Capt.) I. G. Symons, 43rd Bn. School teacher; of Alberton, S. Aust.; b. Petersburg, S. Aust., 3 Dec. 1891.

⁵³ Pte. D. J. Anderson, M.M. (No. 227; 43rd Bn.) Labourer; of Broken Hill, N.S.W.; b. Toora, Vic., 2 Jan. 1897.

⁵⁴ Maj. J. T. Moran, M.C.; 43rd Bn. Officer of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Adelaide; b. Geelong, Vic., 20 Aug. 1873.

Australia, corrected the drift by giving his troops the order first to "left incline" and then to "right incline." Part of his company under Lieut. Watts⁵⁵ on reaching the front line, crossed it and then worked up it from the south with a party on either side; while the Germans fired at the party in their front, Lieut. Watts with the other party bombed them from the rear. While the platoon was so engaged a machine-gun at the edge of the village opened upon it. The platoon sergeant went to a tank and pulled the bell-handle at the back of the machine. A door opened and he showed where the machine-gun was. The tank, says one account, "went straight over and rubbed it out."⁵⁶

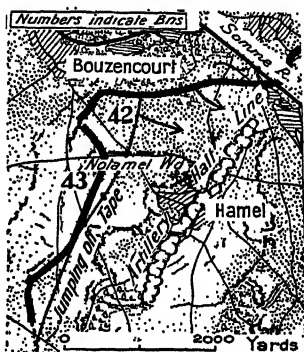
Thus, when the ten-minutes halt line was reached, the defences of Hamel had been taken; the flank companies of the 43rd were preparing to enter the village from north and south, and the centre company was entering it from the west.

On the northern flank the attack by the 42nd Battalion went smoothly, in precise accordance with plan. It was

The flanks

fortunate that here No-Man's Land was wide, for, as they had moved on to the tapes at 2 o'clock, the sections of the northernmost company near the Somme marshes found that the ground had been shelled with "blue cross" gas which set the men sneezing. Apparently the enemy did not hear them. When they advanced, a couple of sections from Bouzencourt joined in, sweeping the marshes, from which

a handful of scattered Germans ran back. When the barrage made its second lift the tanks had caught up and, keeping on



⁵⁵ Lt. L. S. Watts, M.C., 43rd Bn. Metallurgist; of Hyde Park, S. Aust.; b. Semaphore, S. Aust., 3 May 1884.

⁵⁶ The German crew, it is added, probably ran away when the monster came up. This, however, by no means invariably happened. Col. Bingham of the Tanks reported that, in general, the German machine-gun crews "showed extraordinary courage and tenacity and refused to surrender until either completely wiped out or run over by the tank."

the edge of it, as Col. Bingham had ordered them to do despite the danger, moved across to wherever a German machine-gun was suspected, examining the position and suppressing the gun, if there.

On the southern flank, where two battalions of the 6th (Victoria) Brigade advanced, the barrage was perfect. The leading tanks caught up the infantry at the first German trench and fired down it both ways, "crushing," as Lieut. Garton reported, "all the spirit that the enemy may have had to fight." Here progress assumed the ease of a field day. The tanks pressed on into the fringe of the barrage, leading the infantry, which indeed sometimes tended to follow their wanderings and so lose proper direction. On this exposed plateau the smoke screen both on the flanks and ahead proved a vital protection for tanks and infantry; the Germans farther back could see nothing nor could their forward posts detect the Australians until these were upon them. The left battalion (21st)⁵⁷ passed three trenches, in each of which were Germans with machine-guns, but only at the last did they open fire. Even there (says the report of the Victorian company commander)⁵⁸

as the gunners were wearing gas-masks it was not very effective and was soon overcome—one gunner was killed, two wounded, and three captured.

After the attack had passed, some of the enemy who had been missed by the left flank began to snipe and bomb the supporting company as it set to digging in. In ten minutes' fighting Lieut. Garton's men surrounded these Germans, who then surrendered.

The right battalion (23rd) reported that the artillery barrage was "the best we have been with."⁵⁹ Except on its left flank⁶⁰ the 23rd had to make only a short advance, but the Germans

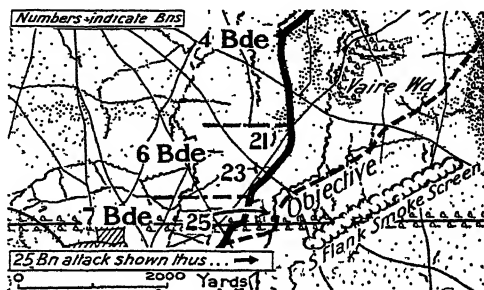
⁵⁷ Here again the reader meets the Querrieu brewery company, which formed the left of the 21st; it was temporarily commanded by Lt. W. H. Roberts (Kensington, Vic.).

⁵⁸ Capt. M. B. H. Kelly, 21st Bn. Engineering student; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Malvern, 3 Mar. 1891.

⁵⁹ The eight Stokes mortars of the 6th L.T.M. Bty. and two of the 5th had to fire by the map, as the observers could not see the German trench. Their bombardment missed the trench, though it probably suppressed the fire from it. The 6th L.T.M. Bty. had three guns hit at the start. Four of its mortars went forward with the infantry.

⁶⁰ Here Capt. R. G. Moss's company, following behind the left of the other two, strung out a line to connect with the flank of the 21st Bn.

in front of the right fought stubbornly, and had to be bombed down their trench before the centre company, Capt. Hinchliffe's,⁶¹ could reach the right, Lieut. Hodgson's,⁶² or the latter reach the 25th Battalion (7th Brigade). The opposition to the 25th on the extreme flank astride of the Roman road east of Villers-Bretonneux was even more stubborn. The Queenslanders attacked without tanks, covered by a bombardment in which the Stokes mortars of the 7th Light Trench Mortar Battery played a part.⁶³ The Australian Heavy Trench Mortar Battery⁶⁴ helped in suppressing fire from the flank by throwing its huge bombs into Monument Wood and the railway. The two attacking companies⁶⁵



advancing very close to the barrage seized the German trench, although on the left its garrison continued to fight after the Australians were among them.

On the right, immediately south of the Roman road, a German post which formed the southern point of the objective resisted with such determination that, of two platoons assaulting it, only nine men survived unwounded to make the final charge. These took the strong-point. They constituted, however, a very small garrison when at 4.20 a.m. the Germans counter-attacked them from two directions, along the road and from the southward continuation of the trench. S.O.S. flares

⁶¹ Capt. G. L. Hinchliffe, M.C.; 23rd Bn. Commercial traveller; of Kew, Vic.; b. Richmond, Vic., 31 July 1890.

⁶² Lt. S. J. Hodgson, M.C.; 23rd Bn. Station overseer; of Langawiwa Station, via Broken Hill, N.S.W.; b. Woodford, Essex, Eng., 18 May 1890.

⁶³ The 25th was also covered by a barrage from 19 machine-guns. The Stokes mortars had to use the wretched "blue ring" ammunition, the immense flash of which drew the attention of the enemy and brought retaliation. Moreover one bomb burst prematurely, killing two of the crew and wounding another. By 7 o'clock the retaliation was so severe that the battery had to shift its position along the trench.

⁶⁴ See footnote 8 on p. 37.

⁶⁵ The 27th Bn. had taken over part of the 25th's front, allowing this battalion to concentrate on its front of attack.

were fired and brought down an accurate barrage of artillery and machine-gun fire through which comparatively few Germans penetrated. These few, however, came on and began a fierce bomb-fight of which the issue was in the balance when help arrived in the shape of a platoon sent along the trench by the northern company.

The beating off of this local counter-attack (reported Maj. Page, commanding the 25th) seemed to be the last straw on the enemy's backs, for his morale, already weakened by our artillery, completely gave way and parties of twos and threes, and in one case ten, came in and surrendered from distances up to 350 yards from our objective.

The tanks attached to the 6th Brigade, one of which nosed around 1,000 yards east of the objective, were a powerful cause of this demoralisation. But after 5.30, when the tanks had turned homewards, the Queenslanders by keen sniping kept the enemy as far back as 400-500 yards from their new front. The casualties of the 25th were not light—93 in all; in the fighting near the strong-point Lieut. Toft⁶⁶ was killed and Lieut. Beanland⁶⁷ mortally wounded. But 92 prisoners and 5 machine-guns were taken, some of these guns being afterwards used against the enemy.

On the whole of the southern flank the final objective was attained before the barrage reached its ten-minutes halt line.⁶⁸

The halt By General Monash's instructions, where German trenches existed at the objective, the troops occupied them. Where there were none, they dug. While the contingent from the 2nd Division was occupied in this consolidation, the attacking forces of the 4th and 11th Brigades were easily reorganised behind the halted barrage. Here and there some German post in the area passed over by the barrage still used its machine-gun. In the 43rd, about to enter Hamel, a Lewis gunner already referred to, L.-Corpl. Shaw, looking round observed 200 yards away a

⁶⁶ Lt. C. G. Toft, 25th Bn. Bank clerk; of Bundaberg, Q'land; b. Bundaberg, 2 Apr. 1893. Killed in action, 4 July 1918.

⁶⁷ Lt. C. H. Beanland, 25th Bn. Sawyer; of Woodford, Q'land; b. Woodford, 17 Oct. 1895. Died of wounds, 4 July 1918.

⁶⁸ On the front of the 25th Bn. half the field-guns ceased fire, or resumed ordinary harassing fire, at 3.50 a.m., forty minutes from the start; but the smoke barrage laid down by 4.5-inch howitzers diagonally across the plateau, from the Roman road to a point near Vaire Wood, continued for two hours.

machine-gun firing from behind a bank which sheltered its crew. He made for it and, when 100 yards distant, began hosing it with his gun at the hip as he went. When he was thirty yards from it a German officer bravely rushed towards him firing a revolver, but was killed by his fire. As Shaw reached the post, the last survivor of the crew came at him. Shaw, whose magazine was now empty, hit him on the head with his revolver and then shot him. Eight Germans lay dead in the post and the casing of the gun was pierced with Shaw's bullets. Farther south, on the flank of the 15th, Germans were running into Hamel, but fire still came from a post outside the northern edge of Vaire-Hamel Wood and from the wood itself until one of the 11th Brigade's tanks moving over from Hamel suppressed it. At this stage occurred the only serious miscarriage so far as the tanks were concerned. One of those with the 43rd, apparently losing direction, came back firing on a platoon of Australians and one of Americans, scattering them so that it was long before their leaders could collect all their men. At Vaire Wood the tanks with the 16th Battalion suppressed several posts, but it was found that the intended signal from infantry to tanks—the firing of a smoke grenade in the direction in which help was required—was generally useless, the bursts being too similar to those of the smoke shells.

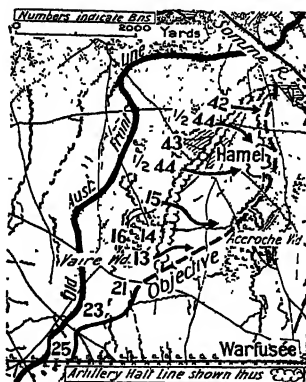
During the halt some of the Australians, as had often happened in the battles of 1917, went through the barrage, probably hunting for prisoners and souvenirs. The attitude of the men throughout the fight was, indeed, noticeably carefree. "Nos. 14 and 15 Platoons hopped joyfully over," was how Lieut. Conrad⁶⁹ of the 42nd described the start. Later, in a tight corner, Lieut. Craven of the 14th heard his men talking as they dug. "Do you think Fitzroys'll beat Carltons on Saturday?" was the kernel of the conversation. In front of Notamel Wood Lieut. Roberts⁷⁰ (43rd) heard a man ask his neighbour: "What'd you do, Bill, if you were pinned down by the feet by a tank and a box of ammunition was falling on your head from an aeroplane?"

⁶⁹ Lt. H. V. Conrad, 42nd Bn. Clerk; of Adelaide; b. Adelaide, 29 Apr. 1886. Killed in action, 8 Aug. 1918.

⁷⁰ Lt. T. W. B. Roberts, M.C.; 43rd Bn. Farmer; of Kybunga, S. Aust.; b. Kybunga, 27 Apr. 1889.

**The
second
stage**

In the first stage the tanks had rendered easy the advance in many sectors—though not in all; but in the second stage, when daylight had arrived and all the machines had caught up, they played their full part. In the centre the advance in this stage was about as long as in the first, but on the flanks much less. Resistance was to be expected, on the left, from the old Amiens defence line just over the brow of the prominent ridge beyond Hamel, on the right, where the objective fell short of that line, from machine-gun posts scattered among the many small earthworks or communication trenches west of Accroche Wood,⁷¹ which lay mainly in the next gully. By this time both tanks and infantry were discovering for themselves a satisfactory method of co-operation, many of the tanks advancing actually in the fringe of the barrage which, now being mainly shrapnel, did them little damage, the infantry following, but generally less dangerously close to the barrage than Australians had been accustomed to work. To “hug” the barrage was now unnecessary—German machine-gun crews when uncovered by the curtain of shells were overawed by the tanks, which either fired direct into their positions with machine-guns or grape-shot, or else used their weight to flatten out the emplacements, sometimes crushing such brave men as stayed there—an action which inevitably involved the risk of also crushing the enemy’s wounded.⁷² At various parts of the battlefield tanks levelled out by their weight whole lines of shelters and rifle-pits along the edges of banks and sunken roads. From one dugout so run over in Notamel Wood a German emerged unharmed, but it is said “utterly bewildered.” The Australian infantry was eager to clear these positions while



⁷¹ See Vol. XII, plate 510. The old line ran through and behind it.

⁷² It is recorded that no wounded of their own side were run over by the tanks.

batman⁷⁹ was killed by a shell of the Australian barrage, and immediately afterwards an N.C.O. with the party, Corpl. Cochrane,⁸⁰ was shot through the head. Germans were now seen running away northwards along the trench—which was really a communication sap—and the Victorians following them came on two dugouts. Rule, furious at the firing after surrender, ordered the occupants to come out, but there emerged only a crowd of young boys.

We could not kill children (he says). . . . With a boot to help them along they ran with their hands above their heads back to our lines.⁸¹

As Ramsay Wood and Rule stood looking along the trench for some sign of the retreat of the rest of the garrison, Wood was shot through the head. Only three of the party being then left, Rule went back and brought up a section and some machine-guns to hold the post. Apparently this post blocked the retreat of the enemy in question, for, later in the day, forty Germans from the north-west (in which direction the trench wound) came along in twos and threes and surrendered. Farther north another gap in the 13th's line from which fire came was filled by Lieut. Garton⁸² and Davies⁸³ (14th Battalion) with their platoons, who took 22 prisoners and some trench-mortars with which they afterwards pelted the Germans in Accroche Wood. Lieut. W. Jacka's⁸⁴ company filled a third gap by means of a patrol, and part of the 13th's own support company also was sent up.

While consolidation was going on with the protective barrage and smoke screen 400 yards ahead, the tanks were, if possible, of even greater assistance than during the advance. First, it was at this stage that the four carrier tanks delivered their loads at the appointed

⁷⁹ Pte. D. W. Floyd (No. 317; 14th Bn.). Labourer; of Bairnsdale, Vic.; b. Omeo Plains, Vic., 20 Sep. 1893. Died of wounds, 4 July 1918.

⁸⁰ Cpl. H. S. Cochrane (No. 5762; 14th Bn.). Farmer; of Poowong, Vic.; b. Oakleigh, Vic., 14 Feb. 1897. Killed in action, 4 July 1918.

⁸¹ *Jacka's Mob*, p. 305.

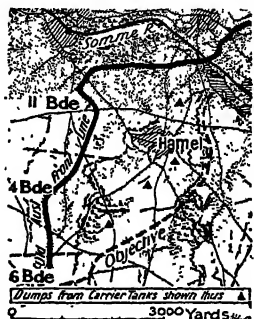
⁸² Lt. S. J. J. Garton, D.C.M.; 14th Bn. Cabinet maker; of Brunswick, Vic.; b. Ringarooma, Tas., 2 Dec. 1891.

⁸³ Lt. G. F. Davies, M.C.; 14th Bn. Solicitor; of South Yarra, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, Vic., 29 Aug. 1887.

⁸⁴ Capt. W. Jacka, 14th Bn. Labourer; of Wedderburn, Vic.; b. Wedderburn, 6 Mar. 1897; brother of Capt. Albert Jacka, V.C.

places comparatively close behind the front line. The Australians were normally good carriers; parties from reserve or attacking battalions would usually struggle through barrages, determined that ammunition and supplies should reach their "cobbers" in the front line. But never had supplies reached the front with the swiftness with which they were delivered this day or in such profusion. The young colonel of the 13th, following up the attack, as was his habit, to see that all was right, reached at an early hour the position beyond Vaire Wood where the battalion dump was to be established, and found the site covered with boxes and material. "Why, what's this?" he asked. A man jumped from behind the pile. "It's from our tank, sir," he said—the carrier had already arrived, unloaded, and returned. It had delivered 134 coils of barbed-wire, 180 long and 270 short screw pickets—all for the wire-entanglement; 45 sheets of corrugated iron, 50 petrol tins of water, 150 trench-mortar bombs, 10,000 rounds of ammunition, 4 boxes of No. 36 grenades and 16 of No. 23. The 4th Brigade also used the 14th Battalion to carry a large consignment,⁸⁵ but the 11th Brigade relied almost exclusively on the tanks. In all, four carrier tanks delivered without difficulty loads which would have required fatigue parties totalling 1,200 men; and some of the infantry, including at least one commander, considered that in this achievement lay the outstanding lesson of the battle.

The infantry's new-found confidence in the fighting tanks also was confirmed by the activity which these showed everywhere during consolidation. It did not take the infantry long to establish its new line; where trenches existed the troops were, by order, to occupy them; where they did not exist the



⁸⁵ Four barrels of chloride of lime, 12 stand-posts for anti-aircraft Lewis guns, 150 petrol tins of water, 10,000 sandbags, 220 coils of barbed-wire, 500 long and 1,000 short screw pickets, 200,000 rounds of small arms ammunition in boxes, 1,500 No. 36 grenades, 1,000 No. 27, and 2,000 No. 5. All this was, of course, in addition to the heavy load of rations, ammunition, water, sandbags, and bombs that each man carried.

ground was generally soft. The Americans dug excellently.⁸⁶ In many parts the Australian officers, knowing the position to be now secure,⁸⁷ told the tank officers, in accordance with the arrangements, that they could now go. But all along the line the tanks had been helping the digging infantry by going out, sometimes alone, sometimes with a party of Australians or Americans, to suppress any Germans seen or suspected in the wide belt between the front line and the protective barrage; in some cases tanks and infantrymen went into or through the barrage. Thus tanks entered Accroche Wood, and on the extreme right one young tank officer shelled scattered parties of Germans in the trench elements about the Roman road in the direction of Warfusée. Another got out of his tank and told the company commanders on the right where their flanks were. A third, on a German post being shown to him, drove up to it and rooted out fifty prisoners.⁸⁸ In most parts, after being told to go, the tanks "pottered around for a bit," as a narrative from the 13th Battalion states. The smoke screen was still ahead.

Early in this stage, with the brightening of the day, observers in rear had their first real view of the battlefield. The smoke barrier in the valley beyond the objective cut out all the farther landscape, and made the objective ridge appear as the horizon. At 4.35 the farthest part of the objective was due to be attacked. An observer on the heights north of the Somme noted: "4.45. Tanks everywhere beyond Hamel. Beyond Vaire Wood."

Along the ridge, among the tanks, could be seen infantry standing in those unmistakable easy attitudes that marked the Digger in every fight. One tank was seen to slide forward,

⁸⁶ On the left flank, at least one officer of the 11th Bde. reported that some German prisoners had been made to help in the digging of trenches. This foolish action was a direct violation of the Geneva Convention, and, if word of it had afterwards reached the enemy, would not merely have been welcomed by his officials for German propaganda, but would have brought harsh retaliation on British prisoners in Germany.

⁸⁷ Several battalions used captured German machine-guns, having given their men special training in the use of them. Lt. W. G. Faulkner (Claremont, W. Aust.; killed in action, 31 Aug. 1918) of the 44th, for example, got four of them into action.

⁸⁸ On the right the work of Lt. J. L. Berry of the 13th Tank Bn. was especially appreciated, but much fine performance by others went unrecorded.

slide back, and slide forward again like a housewife's flat-iron. It was "rubbing out" some German shelter.⁸⁹

At the same time the contact aeroplanes of No. 3 Squadron, A.F.C., came over tooting to the infantry to burn its flares. The lights at once appeared along the objective (ignited in trenches or shell-holes so that the German infantry would not see) and were marked by the observers in the aeroplanes on maps which they dropped ten minutes later at headquarters of the 4th Division.⁹⁰ By 5.30 most of the tanks had left the front, though at that hour came a message from Capt. Kelly of the 21st Battalion saying that the tank out Warfusée way, 1,000 yards south-east of him, was still "careering about . . . using its guns effectively." All except three out of sixty had reached their objectives; by 11 a.m. all but five were safely back at their rallying points, at least five miles in rear,⁹¹ and the missing five were brought back during the next two days. Of their crews only 13 officers and men were put out of action.⁹²

German troops, who at first had been scattered confusedly all over the area 400-500 yards beyond the lines, now began to settle down and to snipe from the crops. In some places where, through the occurrence of hard chalky ground, Australians and Americans were still digging, this fire was troublesome. From trenches on the right front of the 6th Brigade also the shooting was severe. The wiring parties had to cease work. The 6th Brigade snipers, sent up from the rear,⁹³ now

⁸⁹ An observer with a direct telephone line to corps headquarters gave similar information at 5 a.m. Many of the tanks also sent messages by pigeons, which they had carried. Thus No. 7 Section, 8th Bn. (Capt. E. A. H. Jones) reported itself at the objective with the infantry (on the flank) at 3.45 a.m.; No. 1 Section, 8th Bn., at 4.50; others at 4.40, 4.45, and so on. But these messages did not reach headquarters of the 5th Tank Bde. till between 6 and 6.30.

The infantry on this occasion tested the sending of messages by rockets, but, though one of these fell ten yards from the station to which it was directed, some others fell at a distance, and it was difficult to see their flight in the smoke and to find them in the crop. On some of those found the messages were burnt. Lamp signalling succeeded better; the 43rd signalled by lamp from a tree. The receiving stations were sometimes difficult to locate, and, to make sure, some signallers repeated their messages six times. Both 4th and 11th Bdes. also used wireless sets, and the first message from the troops on the objective came by that means. By 5.30, however, the 4th Bde. had telephone communication with the front and thereafter the linesmen, repairing breaks under shell-fire, kept it open almost continuously.

⁹⁰ Two of them are with Sir John Monash's records.

⁹¹ Two had been towed from the final objective. Five tanks which had been hit managed to carry on. No Mark V tank fell into German hands until July 23, when the 9th Tank Bn. assisted the French on the Avre.

⁹² Later, however, when the crews had returned to Blangy-Tronville, 5 officers and 3 men of the 13th Tank Bn. were killed by an aeroplane bomb.

⁹³ They were sent when a success signal was sighted.

established themselves in pairs and began to shoot. Three of them were themselves soon hit, but their fire and that of the Stokes mortars gradually suppressed the enemy, the snipers claiming twenty-one hits. In the 13th Battalion five Americans under one of their own corporals were set to snipe at Germans trying to settle in the crops 600 yards away. Here and there Australians and Americans still went out as far as 400 yards and brought in prisoners.⁹⁴

It was at this stage also that, leaving Poulainville aerodrome at 6 a.m., twelve aeroplanes of No. 9 Squadron, R.A.F., began the carriage of ammunition to the fighting troops. At the same time the sky became crowded with other British squadrons some of whose machines could be seen wheeling like hawks and then suddenly diving, evidently at German batteries or parties of infantry hidden behind the next hill.⁹⁵ One after another the ammunition carriers came over at 1,000 feet or less, each to drop two brown parachutes at one of the appointed places or wherever a V-signal was displayed, then returning for another load. Each parachute carried one box of ammunition, 1,200 rounds,⁹⁶ and each 'plane on an average made four trips. In all 93 boxes (111,600 rounds) were dropped. One box fell within ten feet of a post of the 6th Machine Gun Company.⁹⁷ Two were carried by the wind into Ger-

⁹⁴ North-east of Hamel immediately after reaching the objective, Lt. F. H. Sessarago (Toowoomba, Q'land), going out with a party to attack a heavy German machine-gun which was causing casualties, was killed by a shell of the Australian barrage just as his manoeuvre was completed. A private, W. F. Lovering (Coruna Station, Barcardine, Q'land), though wounded in the legs, rushed the machine-gun, bayoneted the gunner, and then fell unconscious, but the gun was captured. At another point on the 42nd's front Lt. C. V. McI. Broom (Bundaberg, Q'land) established a picket line 200 yards ahead of the objective. Thirty minutes later a tank ("Aussie") came up and asked the way "home." It left with him a box of ammunition and 16 Lewis gun magazines.

South of Hamel, as late as 2 p.m., an N.C.O. of the 15th Bn. with eight men rushed a German post, killing several men and taking five prisoners and four machine-guns. The Americans constantly participated in similar sallies. Lt. H. A. Yagle (Dundee, U.S.A.) and Sgt. F. A. Koijsane (Berwyn, U.S.A.; died 19 Oct. 1929), 132nd Infantry, with two Australians captured a machine-gun 200 yards ahead of the objective. (Both were awarded the D.S.C., Yagle receiving also the M.C. and Koijsane the M.M.).

⁹⁵ Nos. 23, 41, and 209 Sqdns. dropped many bombs on German troops from a low height.

⁹⁶ According to the squadron's report. Five sites were marked with a large white calico "N," and were supplied by eight of the aeroplanes. The other four aeroplanes looked out for machine-gunners who put out "V's." The parachutes were 14 feet in diameter.

⁹⁷ In practice, dropping boxes at 1,000 feet, the 'planes had usually delivered them within 100 yards of the mark.

man territory and hung in the trees of Accroche Wood. The majority fell some distance from their intended destinations, but in many cases this supply was found useful.⁹⁸ The opinion of the infantry was that, with more practice, the method might be highly valuable for getting supplies to infantry in difficult positions. Indeed next day the Germans, finding it difficult to send ration parties to the scattered posts in their new front line, threw rations from low-flying 'planes without parachutes and incidentally delivered a few of these parcels to the Australian outposts.



This aerial delivery was being completed—as yet with only one miscarriage, by which an aeroplane was lost⁹⁹—when, at about 9.30, most of the British bombing and fighting 'planes withdrew. Soon afterwards a number of German machines, evidently sent up in response to urgent call, appeared overhead and for an hour or two the air was dominated by the enemy as it had previously been by the British, more than thirty German machines being overhead at once, diving at the newly formed posts, dropping bombs and machine-gunning the troops there. These activities caused little more than annoyance, but the directing of the German artillery by the air observers upon the new Australian positions, especially in the well-known defence line east of Hamel, was a more serious matter. The British ammunition carrying 'planes and the Australian observing 'planes continued their work notwithstanding the odds against them. A second ammunition carrier was lost, shot down,

⁹⁸ The 13th Bn. says that the ammunition thus supplied was "very useful"; the 21st Bn. says it was "of great assistance."

⁹⁹ Some onlookers reported that this machine was hit by a shell from the Australian barrage. A close observer in the 11th Bde., however, states that its parachute, when thrown out at 1,200 feet, caught in the wing and tore part of the fabric. The pilot managed to steady his machine and was then seen to hand control to his observer while he himself climbed out on the wing to clear the entanglement. The 'plane was brought safely to within 100 feet of the ground when something again went wrong and it crashed. The pilot was found dead and the observer dying. (It is possible that both accounts are right, and that the final crash was caused by a shell.)

but several observing machines of No. 3 Australian Squadron beat off their assailants.¹⁰⁰

Meanwhile, the 43rd Battalion and tanks had thoroughly cleared Hamel,¹ where 300 Germans—some wearing gas-masks—were found, mostly in cellars and dugouts.

**During
the day**

The arrival of the Australians was the first that some of them knew of the attack. One South Australian, L.-Corpl. Schulz,² whose duty was to search for documents, had noted on air-photographs the trace of a buried cable leading first into Notamel Wood and thence into the village. With two German-speaking Americans allotted to help him he followed this trace to a dugout in the northern part of Hamel. After the Americans had spoken in German to its occupants, Schultz entered the dugout and received the surrender of a battalion commander and his staff. The tanks overawed almost all opposition, although three were disabled here, two on the outskirts being hit by shells,³ and one in the village overturning. About 7 o'clock Capt. Cope fired three green lights, meaning "Hamel cleared," and two companies of the 43rd withdrew to a line which meantime had been formed in rear⁴ by the reserve company and the Lewis gun teams. The other two companies returned to the old Australian front line,⁵ the 43rd thus becoming a reserve for the 11th Brigade.⁶ An hour earlier the 16th Battalion (4th Brigade), having thoroughly finished the clearing of Vaire and Hamel Woods, where it took 400 prisoners, had similarly withdrawn to the old front line.

Until this time the fire of the German artillery had been ineffective. A scattered barrage had descended, first on the

¹⁰⁰ It is claimed that the squadron brought down one north-east of Hamel Wood. See *The Battle Below (History of No. 3 Squadron, A.F.C.)*, by H. N. Wrigley, p. 82.

¹ Among others an Australian private, E. N. Toope (Prospect, S. Aust.) of the 43rd, having lost his platoon, formed a party from various companies and went on with the mopping-up.

² Cpl. B. V. Schulz, D.C.M. (No. 1105; 43rd Bn.). Farmer; of Willowie, S. Aust.; b. Wilmington, S. Aust., 22 Feb. 1893.

³ One probably from the Australian barrage.

⁴ Just short of the old German front line.

⁵ These companies began digging two communication trenches.

⁶ At this stage on a building at the eastern end of Hamel there was seen fluttering a small French flag. This had been placed there for a bet by Capt. Moran, who climbed out on the rafters to fix it.

Villers-Bretonneux plateau, and next on the old Australian front facing Hamel,⁷ but the counter-battery fire of the Fourth Army's heavy artillery, as well as of the French, who helped by firing on the German artillery groups in the south, combined with uncertainty as to where the Australians were, had made the German reply almost harmless. At 8 o'clock some of the German field-guns, having probably taken up new positions, became more active, and from 9 o'clock Hamel was heavily shelled.⁸ The fire on the village did not prevent a corporal of the 43rd, T. Ryan,⁹ who had seen an old dump of British ammunition in a burning house, from asking leave of Lieut. Canaway to take a party to salve it. They brought back 73 boxes, each of 1,000 rounds, as well as some boxes of bombs.

Hamel and the ridge beyond it had been taken with slight loss. The capture of prisoners had been large and thus far there was no sign of counter-attack. "There's a catch in this somewhere—it's too easy," was a general comment. Indeed an embarrassment was that the smooth clearance of the wounded from the front, including their carriage by returning tanks, brought them so swiftly to the motor loading post, half a mile behind the old front line,¹⁰ that the motor ambulances arriving from the rear were insufficient to prevent the accumulation of 70 or 80 cases waiting for clearance. The A.D.M.S. of the 4th Division, Lieut.-Col. McGregor,¹¹ hearing from Maj. Elwell¹² of the difficulties, sent up his deputy, Maj. Lind,¹³ who, on arrival, asked for more cars and all available horse ambulances—the 4th Field Company of Engineers even sent

⁷ This fire began seven minutes after zero hour.

⁸ Later in the day "Q" Battery, R.H.A., behind the crest north of the Somme, seeing German ammunition waggons pouring along the Roman road east of Warfusée into the valley beyond Accroche Wood, dug in the trail of one of its guns and hit at least one waggon at 7,700 yards' range.

⁹ Sgt. T. Ryan, D.C.M. (No. 5062; 43rd Bn.). Farmer; of Millicent, S. Aust.; b. Millicent, 2 Dec. 1888.

¹⁰ Near 4th Bde. H.Q., at a quarry south of Hamel.

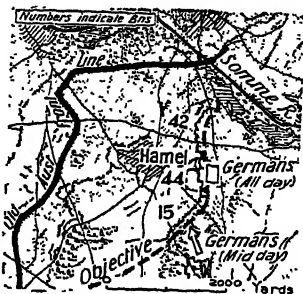
¹¹ Col. R. S. McGregor, D.S.O., V.D., D.A.D.M.S., 5th Aust. Div., 1916-17; commanded 4th Fld. Amb., 1918; A.D.M.S., 4th Aust. Div., 1918-19. Medical practitioner; of Boggabri, N.S.W.; b. 7 Mar. 1890.

¹² Maj. L. B. Elwell, M.C., A.A.M.C. Medical practitioner; of Stanthorpe, Q'land; b. Albrighton, Shropshire Eng., 26 Aug. 1884.

¹³ Brig. E. F. Lind, D.S.O., V.D. D.A.D.M.S., II Anzac Corps, 1917-18; D.A.D.M.S., 4th Aust. Div., 1918; commanded 2nd Field Amb. 1918-19. Commanded 23rd Inf. Bde., A.I.F., 1940. Medical practitioner; of Williamstown, Vic.; b. South Yarra, Vic., 23 Dec. 1888.

two of its pontoon waggons¹⁴—and with these means by noon the pool of wounded was cleared.

Few of the troops saw any effort by the Germans to counter-attack. Even the Royal Horse Artillery observers on the heights north of the Somme detected nothing more than the distant movement of a couple of companies across a hillside far down the Somme valley at Méricourt. Nevertheless such attempts were made. At 11 a.m. and again at noon airmen saw about eighty German infantry collecting beyond the gully immediately north of Accroche Wood, in the nearest uncaptured part of the old Amiens defence line. The artillery was called down. The Germans were also fired on by two machine-guns of the 4th Company



posted on Hamel ridge under Lieut. Wright.¹⁵ About thirty managed to trickle across the gully, but the movement then ceased. Half a mile farther north on the knoll east of Hamel, men of the centre and left companies of the 44th, soon after they began consolidating the captured trenches, were shot at and bombed by some nest of Germans on the slope below them. It was found that here the enemy still held a small extension of the trench-system. The commander of the centre company, Lieut. Everett,¹⁶ at first decided to blow them out with Stokes mortars, but, finding that the trench-mortar officer was out of action,¹⁷ he prepared to oust them immediately after dark with a fighting patrol.

The day passed without further interference from the Germans on the battle-front; indeed, in the 6th Brigade's sector on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau the Victorians in the

¹⁴ These carried slightly wounded men. The 12th and 13th Fld. Ambs. sent up all their cars. As usual when congestion occurred, stretchers ran short, but McGregor sent up these and blankets for the waiting men.

¹⁵ Lt. P. H. Wright, M.C.; 4th M.G. Coy. Engineer; of Brisbane; b. Croxton Park, Lincolnshire, Eng., 12 May 1888.

¹⁶ Lt. J. S. Everett, 44th Bn. Clerk; of Maylands, W. Aust.; b. Toodyay, W. Aust., 20 July 1884.

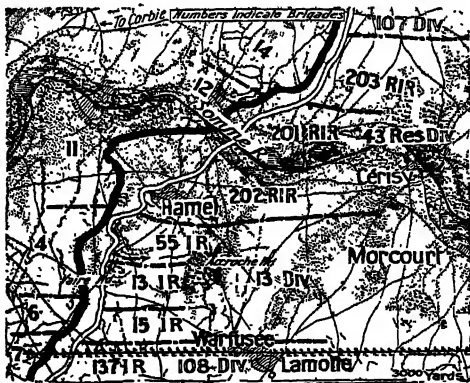
¹⁷ The officer at first in charge, Lt. G. H. Ashton (Rose Park, S. Aust.), had been wounded after capturing a dugout with 20 prisoners.

afternoon pushed far down a communication sap towards a trench-system which the enemy seemed to have abandoned after the attack. Lieut. Weir of the 21st Battalion brought in a wounded German officer and a private; others probing for a quarter of a mile found four abandoned trench-mortars. Later Germans could be seen trying to re-establish a line of posts in that direction.

The curtain covering the events on the German side may now be lifted. The main attack had fallen on two divisions recently arrived

The German side

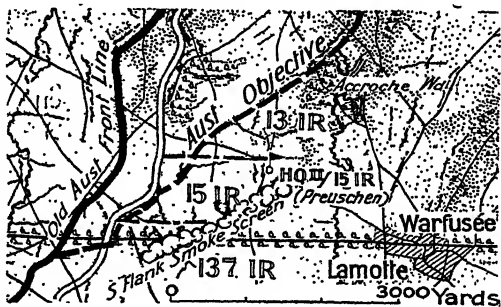
in that front, the 43rd Reserve astride of the Somme after six weeks' rest near Lille, and the 13th at Vaire Wood fresh from a month's rest near Le Cateau.¹⁸ The 43rd, whose 202nd R.I.R. was at Hamel, had been there a fortnight, but the 13th had only just come in; its infantry was in line, but the artillery was still changing over when the attack was launched. It had all three regiments in line, 55th at Pear Trench, and the northern part of Vaire Wood, 13th in centre at Vaire Wood and immediately south of it, and 15th with its left on the Roman road, facing the southern flank of the attack. The 202nd R.I.R. at Hamel had two battalions in line and one in reserve. Each regiment of the 13th Divn., on the other hand, had one battalion in front line, one in support, and one in reserve. Most of the front-line battalions had two companies in the front line and two in the main defence line, which at Hamel was the old French line but farther south ran through Vaire Wood. According to their regimental histories the German companies were considerably weaker even than the Australian, averaging at this time (when influenza in its milder form was raging) about 50 rifles.



From a great part of the front line few Germans returned to tell

¹⁸ One of the reasons advanced by Rawlinson in proposing the attack to Haig was to shake further the already shaken morale of the 24th and 77th Res. and 108th Divs. The 24th Res. had now been relieved by the 43rd Res., men of which had been captured by the 32nd and 45th Bns. on June 25 and 30 respectively. The relief south of the Somme occurred on June 13, but later north of the river. The 43rd near Lille had suffered an epidemic of typhoid, and one battalion, the III/202nd R.I.R., had to be left behind at Gruson on this account, and only rejoined towards the end of June. The third division mentioned by Rawlinson 108th, was still in line, but was only touched by the extreme southern flank of the attack.

what had happened, and the smoke prevented observation. Indeed the length of time that elapsed before the staff of the 108th Divn. (on the southern flank) heard of the attack, was afterwards cited in German orders as a warning against the recurrence of such incidents. It was not until 5.45 that headquarters of the 202nd R.I.R. knew anything of the attack. The commanders and staffs of both its forward battalions had been overrun. In the 13th Divn. the forward battalion (II) of the 15th I.R., although caught only by the southern flank of the attack, almost vanished, no more than one officer and twenty men, in addition to the battalion headquarters, returning. This headquarters, under Cavalry Capt. Freiherr von Preuschen, lay exactly half a mile beyond the objective, and has left the best account of the action among the available German records: First, at 3 a.m., came drumfire. "Only a quarter of an hour later headquarters heard in the direction of the front strong infantry fire. Soon after, tanks appeared on the Roman road (1,000 yards to the south) and the area north of it." Tanks went beyond battalion headquarters and then turned. "When, at 5 a.m., 'English' infantry was visible ahead, battalion headquarters knew that its companies had been overrun." The support battalion (I) was early alarmed but the barrage, raising a haze of smoke and dust, prevented the patrols from finding out what had happened.¹⁹ An advanced post of the support battalion was captured, and another driven back. When a tank came at one of the support companies from the rear, the drum-major, Sgt.-Maj. Schumiki, it is said, coolly let it approach to 30 yards and then fired on it with an anti-tank



rifle, whereupon it made off. The rest of his men continued firing on the Australian infantry, who took cover in the wheat and in shell-holes.²⁰ Preuschen's headquarters was now uncomfortably near the Australian front, individual Australians approaching very close to it, and at 5 p.m. he withdrew it, creeping away with difficulty over the exposed ground.

No counter-attack seems to have been attempted by the 15th I.R., the support battalion merely taking up its battle positions. Beyond Vaire Wood the opposition to Lts. Rule and Ramsay Wood was possibly offered by two sections of the 13th I.R. under Res.-Lt. Rosenbaum, who became rather the hero of the German defence in that sector. The regimental history says that a company of the support battalion also "counter-attacked" in this sector, its leader, Res.-Lt. Clasen, being killed. Possibly these were the troops seen trying to

¹⁹ The effectiveness of the smoke screen caused the 97th I.R. to order that patrols must be sent from the rear if such an attack occurred again. (As elsewhere in this history, the clock-time given is that of the British Army.)

²⁰ *The History of the 15th I.R.* (p. 346) says that by this action the company recaptured the main line of resistance, which had been "lost." Actually it was far beyond the objective, but had probably been abandoned and was now reoccupied.

form a new line across the wheatfields beyond the objective. The 55th I.R. (13th Divn.) threw its support battalion into Accroche Wood and the gully north of it, both east of the Australian objective.

Except for the immediate counter-attack on the post south of the Roman road—a vigorous effort by the supports of the III/137th I.R. (108th Divn.)—the only German reaction that made any impression was that of the 202nd R.I.R. (43rd Res. Divn.) at the hill east of Hamel, known to the Germans as the "Wolfsberg." Here Res.-Lt. Paulsen with a small part of one of the forward battalions had managed to cling to the edge of the Wolfsberg. Another remnant of his battalion (III) clustered in the part of the old French line that was not attacked.

Night was just settling when, at about 10 o'clock, the German artillery heavily bombarded the posts of the 11th Brigade in the old Amiens defence line on the "Wolfsberg" and a party of enemy bombers followed by about 200 infantry attacked up a communication trench leading to it from the strong-point which the Germans still held. At 10.10 the S.O.S. signal was sent up and the British barrage descended for fifteen minutes in immense volume upon the German rear. But the attacking Germans were ahead of it. The Western Australians of the 44th—with the exception of fifteen men, stretcher-bearers and others, who were trapped in a deep dugout—were driven from the German point of entry and, as bombs ran short, had some difficulty in stopping their opponents from continuous encroachment. Fortunately the four Stokes mortars of the 11th L.T.M. Battery near by, now vigorously commanded by a sergeant, J. Distant,²¹ were well supplied with bombs from the carrier tank, and by throwing shells into the communication trench they constantly hampered the enemy. Lieut. Gaze²² of the southern company of the 44th, leading a party northwards along the line, found the Germans, apparently 200-300 strong, well established in 200 yards of trench between the centre and northern companies.

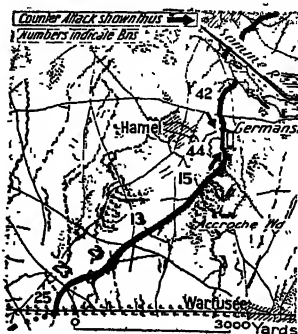
A counter-stroke was accordingly organised. Capt. Adams of the southern company asked the support company (Capt. Fowler²³) to reinforce with a platoon, and from this and

²¹ Sgt. J. Distant, M.M. (No. 316; 11th L.T.M. Bty.). Labourer; of Childers, Q'land; b. Croydon, Eng., 9 Mar. 1885.

²² Lt. F. O. Gaze, M.C.; 44th Bn. Farmer; of Gnowangerup, W. Aust.; b. Adelaide, 2 Apr. 1893.

²³ Capt. H. L. Fowler, 44th Bn. School teacher; of Perth, W. Aust., b. Hemel Hempstead, Herts, Eng., 5 Oct. 1891.

other elements²⁴ a bombing party was organised by Gaze and Lieut. Cornish.²⁵ This would attack up the trench from the south, while the northern company (Capt. Stables)²⁶ would simultaneously assault the enemy's northern flank. There had been much confusion in the dark, and the night was continually disturbed, the British artillery laying down four "counter-preparatory" bombardments, and the Germans constantly shelling with mustard and phosgene gas—an experience most trying to several inexperienced American platoons stationed in isolated trenches. Meanwhile bombs were brought up by a company of the 43rd and two bombing sections of that battalion and some Americans²⁷ also were sent.



At 2 a.m. the bombing parties of the 44th, thus reinforced, attacked the German flanks. On the north Capt. Stables' company was checked by the Germans, but on the southern flank Gaze and Cornish, with Sergts. Padgett²⁸ and Ingvarson,²⁹ Ptes. Tierney³⁰ and Lynch³¹ (44th), Angus³² (43rd), and a dozen others went (as the history of their battalion says) "bald-headed" for the Germans, driving them from bay to bay and finally down the communication trench from which, where it began to peter out, the enemy fled helter-skelter over the open

²⁴ The teams of the 11th I.T.M. Bty. under Sgt. Distant and Cpl. F. P. Pullen, having fired off all their ammunition, joined in with the infantry. (Bullen, who was killed on 1 Sep. 1918, belonged to Fremantle, W. Aust.)

²⁵ Of the centre company. (Lt. C. R. Cornish, D.S.O.; 44th Bn. Locomotive engine driver; of Midland Junction, W. Aust.; b. Arakoon, Q'land, 29 June 1891.)

²⁶ Capt. W. J. Stables, 44th Bn. Civil servant; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. Perth, 30 Apr. 1888.

²⁷ Cpl. R. H. Powell (Joliet, U.S.A.), 131st Inf., with his section volunteered to take part in a bombing attack, and did so.

²⁸ L.-Sgt. J. R. Padgett (No. 546; 44th Bn.). Stone mason; of Pickering Brook, W. Aust.; b. Bradford, Eng., 3 Nov. 1881.

²⁹ Sgt. J. E. V. K. Ingvarson, D.C.M. (No. 1661; 44th Bn.). Dairyman; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. Brede, Denmark, 23 Dec. 1894.

³⁰ L.-Cpl. C. P. Tierney, M.M. (No. 2767; 44th Bn.). Farmer; of Walebing, W. Aust.; b. Wollar, N.S.W. 10 Nov. 1889.

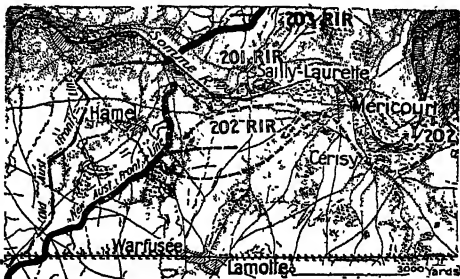
³¹ Pte. J. J. Lynch (No. 638a; 44th Bn.). Axeman, of Brisbane; b. Gympie, Q'land, 1894. Killed in action, 5 July 1918.

³² Pte. F. Angus, M.M. (No. 1031; 43rd Bn.). Farmer; of Mindarie, S. Aust.; b. Beaumont, S. Aust., 19 May 1884.

with the Western Australians after them bombing, snapshooting, and firing Lewis guns from the hip. Just before the enemy broke, Lynch, who is said to have been "irresistible throughout," was shot through the head amid a crowd of Germans.

But the success was overwhelming.³³ The trench which the Germans had retained in the original attack was taken. Six German officers and fifty of other ranks were driven into the dugouts and captured together with 10 machine-guns, and eleven of the Australians, previously captured by the enemy, were freed.³⁴ The 44th's support company moved up and took over this section of the line, its own place being occupied by a company of the 43rd.

It is now known that the German counter-attack at 10 o'clock was made by reserves that had been intended to launch it ever since early morning. As soon as news of the attack on Hamel reached headquarters of the 43rd Res. Divn., the reserve battalion south of the Somme (I/202nd R.I.R.) was ordered up from Méricourt and a battalion of the 201st R.I.R. north of the Somme was also sent. These were undoubtedly the troops whom the observers of the Royal Horse Artillery saw on the move shortly after noon. But the march of both battalions was very slow, aeroplanes constantly diving on them; even single men (says the history of the 202nd) were attacked from the air with bombs and machine-guns, and the morning was well advanced before these troops reached the gully south-west of Cérisy, a mile east of the Wolfsberg. News had then come through that Hamel, and apparently the Wolfsberg also, had been lost, and the I/202nd was ordered to retake the hill immediately. The battalion started towards Lamotte and then was turned back; eventually it sent two companies round by the Somme valley and one by Cérisy Gully to Accroche Wood; doubtless it was the latter that was seen by the Australians and fired on at 2 p.m.



³³ It is stated that an American corporal, T. A. Pope (Chicago) and his platoon helped in this movement, Pope rushing and seizing a machine-gun singlehanded. He and Cpl. Powell were among eighteen Americans decorated by King George V in person for their work at Hamel. (Pope was awarded the D.C.M.—as well as the American M. of H.—and Powell the M.M.)

³⁴ Four others, stretcher-bearers, who had been surprised while attending to a wounded man in the dugout, had been sent by the Germans to the rear carrying a wounded man. The Australian wounded in the dugout were kindly treated, one, Pte. E. G. Mercer (Bayswater, W. Aust.), having his wounds skilfully redressed by a German medical orderly.

No counter-attack could be launched before night. After the bombardment at dark the three companies forced their way into the eastern trenches on the hill, but attempts to mop-up farther failed through lack of troops. Early next morning the reserve battalion from the 201st also was sent up, but, before it arrived, the 202nd had lost its foothold on the Wolfsberg, and the 1/201st accordingly took post along the next spur.

The German command had some intention of renewing the counter-attack. The 448th I.R. (from the 107th Divn. at Morlancourt) was brought up, and also additional artillery. But on July 5 came an order that the 77th Res. Divn.'s artillery, which had been retained for the intended counter-attack, must be sent away. The plan was therefore abandoned. The line of the 1/201st R.I.R. on the next spur became the German front line east of Hamel.

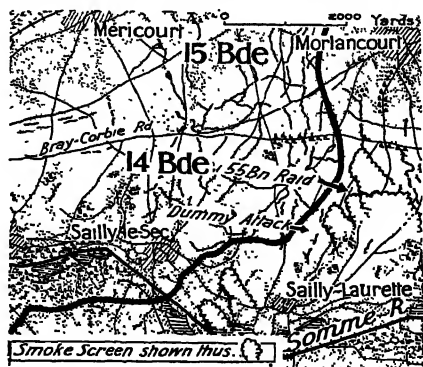
That the German artillery was so innocuous on the Hamel battlefield was doubtless partly due to the feints between the

The feints

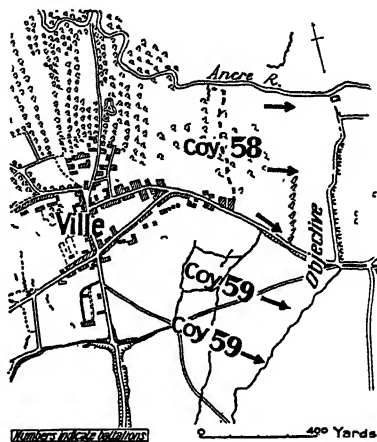
Somme and the Ancre. On the shoulder above Sailly-Laurette the dummy attack, simulated by Lieut. Campbell³⁵ and five men of the 55th raising and lowering fifteen *papier mâché* figures over the parapet for thirty-five minutes after "zero," drew intense machine-gun fire, some of the models being riddled with bullets. The raid of 200 of the 55th under Capt. Wyllie south of the Brick Beacon, though most bravely and skilfully led to its farthest objective, found the Germans on the alert and resulted in the capture of three Germans and two machine-guns at a cost of just one third of the raiding force.³⁶

³⁵ Lt. W. E. Campbell, 55th Bn. Bushman and stockman; of Tamworth, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 8 July 1888.

³⁶ The raid was in many ways a remarkable one. No sooner had the Australian barrage (thickened by the 4th M.T.M. and 14th L.T.M. Batteries) descended than German trench-mortars threw a barrage near the Australian trenches where the attacking force was lying on its tapes. The raiders and their covering barrage were not to advance for three minutes, and during this time an officer and 6 men were killed and 29 men wounded. As the troops rose and went forward, others were hit, a few by machine-gun fire. At the first German trench, 100 yards away, two small groups of the enemy were killed (except for one prisoner taken) and the second wave passed through and made for the second trench. This was protected by a weak belt of wire, and its garrison fought stoutly, but the New South Welshmen succeeded in rushing it. Lt. L. N. Stafford (Woollahra) after killing two Germans was himself killed, but



The attack made by the 15th Brigade (Vic.) east of Ville was a more important undertaking, involving the capture of the new German front line in the marshes and the drier flats below the hills immediately north of the entrance of the Morlancourt pan. The marshes could be held by either side only by scattered posts, and on that front—750 yards, from the Ancre to the Méaulte road—Brig.-Genl. Elliott attacked with a single company of the 58th Battalion. The German posts to be captured lay along a cross-road, one of the few comparatively dry positions on the flats. The part of the objective on drier land, though only some 500 yards in length, was attacked by two companies of the 59th.



This plan had developed from an earlier project of Elliott's to advance his line east of Ville by night assault. He had desired to attack in the dark so as to have the line consolidated before morning, when he expected it to be severely shelled from Morlancourt heights. When the 5th Division was asked to make a diversion simultaneous with the Hamel attack, and General Hobbs proposed that the assault at Ville should be made by day, Elliott vehemently protested, pointing to the probability of heavy loss among the men digging in by day-

Lt. L. Chadwick (Galston, N.S.W.) captured a machine-gun, and several dugouts and a heavy machine-gun on a concrete platform were blown up. The smoke shells made difficult not only sight but breathing, and, as always in this area, it was difficult to keep direction. The leaders, however, managed to guide the party back by noting the lie of the box-barrage. The barrage of the German artillery had fallen behind them nine minutes after "zero," and Lt. W. T. Piddington (Peak Hill, N.S.W.) was killed and some others were wounded during the retirement. Three prisoners of the 232nd R.I.R. (107th Div.) and two light machine-guns were captured, but 3 Australian officers and 64 men were hit.

The history of the 232nd R.I.R. says that its 6th Coy. was attacked and a light machine-gun was taken from its front line and another from the main line of resistance. The company commander, Res.-Lt. Hauschild, hurrying forward to lead a counter-attack, was killed by a bomb, but the company suffered only ten casualties.

light. However, an action at dawn was required and, after discussion as to whether the operation should not be reduced to a mere raid, it was decided to keep the ground won. The troops digging in would be protected for a time by a smoke screen. Some days before the operation the assaulting battalions were withdrawn from the front line, their places being taken by the 60th and 57th through which they would attack.

The two assaulting companies of the 59th were to advance in one wave of three lines—first a thin line of scouts in pairs;³⁷ next, ten yards behind, a line of small groups; finally, twenty-five yards in rear, the Lewis gun sections. The company of the 58th on the left, being three times more extended, could only detail platoons or half-platoons for particular objectives. On the night of July 3rd-4th the assembly was carried out apparently without disturbing the enemy; and the barrage, which descended at 3.10 a.m., is described³⁸ as “very heavy and accurate.” Upon its lifting, the right company of the 59th immediately rushed, with a cheer, the German trench, many of whose occupants ran off through the tall crops, the Victorians shooting at them. Lieut. Facey,³⁹ though wounded, set about blocking the right of the captured trench with two barricades at twenty yards’ interval. Part of the centre company (the left of the 59th), under Capt. McDonald, came upon wire-entanglement in the crop. The right flank platoon, however, under Lieut. McPherson,⁴⁰ was into the German trench just in time. A German, jumping from it, began to fire his machine-gun from the top, but was silenced and the trench was here captured.

McDonald, though unaware that wire had been met, had noticed his two centre platoons sagging back. Three German machine-gun crews were thus enabled to get their guns into action, and opened vigorously, hitting both the platoon com-

³⁷ More than one Australian leader at this time strongly recommended the pairing of men in the widely extended skirmishing lines then necessary. Troops thus disposed lost the feeling of isolation and were less inclined to bunch.

³⁸ By Capt. E. K. Keys (Dandenong, Vic.) of the 57th, through whose line the company of the 58th attacked. The barrage was laid by the left group of the 5th Div’s artillery—6th (Army) and 4th Bdes., A.F.A., and 5th (Army) Bde., R.H.A., together with the 3rd Aust. L.T.M. Bty. and Stokes mortars of the 15th and 8th Aust. L.T.M. Batteries. The III Corps supplied the heavy artillery.

³⁹ Lt. S. G. Facey, D.C.M.; 59th Bn. Farmer; of Mansfield, Vic.; b. Carag Carag, Vic., 27 Apr. 1887. Killed in action, 4 July 1918.

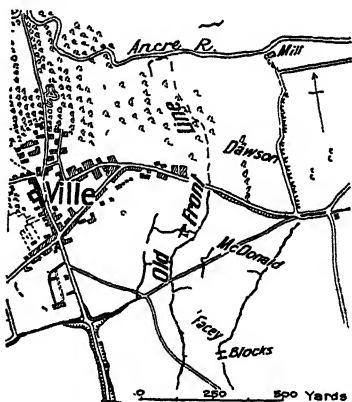
⁴⁰ Lt. W. J. McPherson, 59th Bn. Clerk; of Melbourne; b. South Yarra, Vic., 10 July 1891.

manders, their sergeants, and half their men. A corporal, A. Ibbotson,⁴¹ then made his way to McDonald, who instructed him to bring his men round through McPherson's trench. The left platoon also had reached the trench, and, by arrangement, a bombing attack was made on the enemy from both flanks and the trench cleared. As this attack was proceeding, there was seen, 200 yards ahead of the trench, a body of fifty Germans, evidently the enemy's supports, coming up at the double. The Lewis gunners on McDonald's left opened and the Germans scattered, leaving a number lying in the crop.

German records show that the Australian attack had fallen on the 52nd R.I.R., right flank regiment of the 107th Divn. holding the Morlancourt front. The troops seen at this stage appear to have been a company (5th) of its right front-line battalion attempting to retake the position.

At this stage a stiff bomb-fight could be heard in progress farther south. A forward observing officer of the 16th Battery, A.F.A., Lieut. Croughan,⁴² then with McDonald,⁴³ told him that both Capt. Akeroyd, commander of the right company, and Lieut. Scattergood,⁴⁴ the next senior, had been wounded, and offered to go thither and assist.

What had happened was that while parties were barricading the southern end of the trench, Lieut. Facey, the officer-in-charge, a leader specially trusted for his bravery and capacity, was shot dead as he went along the line. His men had almost



⁴¹ Sgt. A. Ibbotson, M.M. (No. 3173; 59th Bn.). Farmer; of Learmonth, Vic.; b. Arley, Warwickshire, Eng., 13 Jan. 1888.

⁴² Capt. J. P. Croughan, D.S.O.; 16th Bty., A.F.A. Public servant; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Hawthorn, 22 Sep. 1888.

⁴³ Two minutes after reaching the objective trench, Lt. Croughan spoke to battalion headquarters on the telephone and asked that the 18-pounders and 4.5-inch howitzers should fire on the lower terraces of the hill north of Morlancourt, which overlooked from south and south-east the captured ground.

⁴⁴ Lt. W. H. Scattergood, 59th Bn. Clerk; of Brighton, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, Vic., 4 July 1894.

finished the outer barricade when a bomb came over it to burst near their heads, immediately followed by more bombs in showers. The six Victorians in the party ran back to the first barricade, where they awaited the enemy. At this moment there came up a sergeant, P. L. Little,⁴⁵ looking for useful work.⁴⁶ He at once took charge and, finding that the small guard had few bombs, ordered them back fifty yards along the trench to await a supply already sent for. Lieut. Stavely,⁴⁷ now in command of the company, Croughan, the artillery officer, and others hurriedly organised the collecting of bombs, and Sergt. Hutchinson⁴⁸ with a number of men carrying them quickly reached the small party. Rifle-grenadiers were sent to fire overhead and the Victorians at once attacked. The Germans fell back and, though they continued to bomb, were driven well beyond the second barricade. Sergt. Little now caused this barricade to be solidly built, and, though the Germans made a second attempt, they were henceforth kept at a distance by rifle-grenades.

The counter-attack had been made by parts of two companies (2nd and 3rd) of the left front-line battalion of the 52nd R.I.R. Like the Australians, for a time they ran short of bombs.

While these events were happening on the right, the left company—Capt. Dawson's of the 58th—was carrying through a more difficult task, and one of special interest inasmuch as this company's extension was greater than Australians had ever attempted in trench-warfare—80 rifles⁴⁹ attacking the German outposts on a front of 750 yards. Events started with a mishap. The company was to be furnished with a special reserve of one platoon to assist, if necessary, its left upon the Ancre. Lieut. Tasker of the 58th was selected to command this, and was instructed by his battalion commander, Lieut.-Col. Watson, to start early and get his men dug in ahead of the line before the action started. On reaching the outposts in the

⁴⁵ Sgt. P. L. Little, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 3171; 59th Bn.). Hairdresser; of Camberwell, Vic.; b. Richmond, Vic., 18 July 1890.

⁴⁶ With Sgt. F. E. Ledin (of Black Flat, now Glen Waverley, Vic.) he had been occupied in "sabotaging" the German flare signals in order to confuse the enemy. If the Germans fired two greens, Ledin and Little fired two reds, and so on.

⁴⁷ Lt. W. C. B. Stavely, 59th Bn. Assistant shire secretary; of Avoca, Vic.; b. Wycheproof, Vic., 8 Mar. 1894.

⁴⁸ Sgt. W. P. Hutchinson (No. 2182; 59th Bn.). Orchardist; of Somerville, Vic.; b. Sale, Vic., 23 May 1893.

⁴⁹ The company was organised in *three* platoons, each of two bombing and two Lewis gun sections.

marshes, Tasker was told by Lieut. Fleming,⁵⁰ in charge there, that the ground ahead was too boggy for digging. Fleming went out with him to prove it, when a bomb suddenly exploded almost beneath them, wounding both—it had been thrown by an Australian listening post, of whose existence Tasker had been unaware. After endeavouring to carry on, Tasker telephoned for another officer to take charge, and Col. Watson sent Lieut. Flintoft.⁵¹

Meanwhile Capt. Dawson, whose company had previously held this sector for three weeks, and had since studied the operation on a relief map and daily rehearsed its tasks, had come into position.⁵² The artillery barrage, falling at 3.10 and largely supplemented by the fire of Stokes guns and medium trench-mortars on the German front line, was excellent. Dawson, calling to his headquarters, "Come on, boys, they're off," was almost at once slightly wounded, as was Lieut. Davies⁵³ leading the right platoon, but both went on. The three platoons were widely separated, and to some of the advancing troops it appeared for a time that the operation must have failed, for flares were rising behind them⁵⁴ and machine-guns were cracking everywhere—the one hopeful sign was the sound of Lewis guns and Mills bombs in the general din. Sixty yards out, the centre platoon under Lieut. Willis⁵⁵ met and killed a German machine-gun crew, and farther on, in marshy, cratered ground, Willis's scouts overcame another, whose situation they already knew. At the main position, fortunately, this platoon met with little resistance from the Germans.

The number (of Germans) I personally saw killed and running away (said Sgt. Eales,⁵⁶ in charge of Willis's left party) could have thrown stones at my small crew and routed them.

The position of the centre platoon would indeed have been precarious had not the right platoon, working along the Méaulte

⁵⁰ Lt. J. H. Fleming, D.C.M., M.M.; 57th Bn. Plumber; of Elphinstone, Vic.; b. Macorna, Vic., 3 July 1883. Died 10 Sep. 1930.

⁵¹ See Capt. Dawson's and Lt. Tasker's accounts, *Reveille*, July and Aug. 1933.

⁵² Here also the abnormal procedure was followed of issuing to the men, when waiting for the attack, a small nip of rum.

⁵³ Lt. J. E. Davies, M.C.; 58th Bn. Baker; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Talbot, Vic., 18 June 1892.

⁵⁴ Some, at least, however, of the flares seen in rear were probably those fired by the Australians "sabotaging" the German signals.

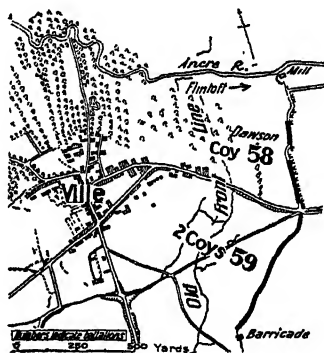
⁵⁵ Lt. H. D. Willis, M.C.; 58th Bn. School teacher; of Warragul and Mansfield, Vic.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 17 Apr. 1883.

⁵⁶ Sgt. P. W. Eales, M.M. (No. 1677; 58th Bn.). Grocer; of Hamilton, Vic.; b. Penshurst, Vic., 8 Sep. 1891.

road and getting past a wire barricade there, entered the southern flank of the German position and then bombed vigorously northward along the crossroad, shooting Germans and clearing the niches and dugouts. They were thus engaged when Capt. Dawson, his face covered with blood, came along and found both platoons on their objective.

Of his left platoon, however, Dawson could hear nothing, and therefore sent his company sergeant-major, A. E. McPhie,⁵⁷ with a companion to reconnoitre. McPhie found the platoon in place on its objective, a mill-house⁵⁸ beside the Ancre. It had encountered the hardest fighting in the battle. When

eighty yards out it had been stopped by a machine-gun. Lieut. Thompson⁵⁹ had immediately spread his men out and then led a charge on the post, killing the crew and capturing two machine-guns. But other gun-crews at the objective had been aroused and the advance was now met by their fire. The guns were protected by wire. Thompson placed part of his platoon to shoot at them from the front while he led a party to the flank



and charged from there. Three more machine-gun nests were thus seized and the objective was reached. Another gun ahead of his flank now opened, hitting several of his men. While organising a rush upon it this gallant officer with Corpl. Skinner⁶⁰ was killed. But the objective was held, though the platoon was diminished by many casualties. Hearing of this, Capt. Dawson ordered up the reserve platoon on the Ancre. Its new commander, Flintoft, had just been informed of the situation ahead by a badly wounded runner, Pte. Cook,⁶¹ and

⁵⁷ C.S.M. A. E. McPhie (No. 4152; 58th Bn.). Farmer; of Apollo Bay, Vic.; b. St. Arnaud, Vic., 27 Mar. 1890.

⁵⁸ This is also referred to in the Australian records as "the estaminet."

⁵⁹ Lt. I. G. Thompson, 58th Bn. Draughtsman; of Saddleworth, S. Aust.; b. Saddleworth, 1897. Killed in action, 4 July 1918.

⁶⁰ Cpl. E. C. Skinner (No. 4642; 58th Bn.). Farm hand; of Baringhup, Vic.; b. Baringhup, 1889. Killed in action, 4 July 1918.

⁶¹ Pte. L. A. Cook, M.M. (No. 2388; 58th Bn.). Coachsmith; of Croydon, Vic.; b. Yarra Glen, Vic., 14 Oct. 1897.

was about to advance—a step also rendered advisable by the fact that his platoon lay beneath the German barrage. Going through marshy land they reached the mill, from which Flintoft made his way to Willis's platoon, 300 yards to the south.⁶² To fill this gap he asked Capt. Keys⁶³ of the 57th in the old front line to send a platoon, which arrived quickly and formed two posts.

The history of the 52nd R.I.R. says that on the northern flank the Australians were at first thrown out by an immediate counter-attack (apparently by the 6th Coy., whose commander, Lt. Schulze, was killed in it). The Australians, however, forced their way back to the position from the south.

The whole objective had thus been seized; of its garrison 64 prisoners were taken, with 15 machine-guns; 70 others were thought to have been killed or wounded, and many fled. To make the front secure the whole of Capt. Jennings⁶⁴ company of the 60th Battalion was sent up, distributed by platoons, another company of the 60th replacing it in the old front line. No further attempt was made by the enemy to retake the position until 8.50 p.m., when the German artillery laid a bombardment on it and, as the posts on the right saw infantry assembled in the crops on the hill south of the river, Capt. McDonald fired an S.O.S. flare and the tremendous protecting barrage descended. The German bombardment ceased in fifty minutes,⁶⁵ the British half an hour later. No more was seen of the German assembly.⁶⁶

German records say that a deliberate counter-attack with artillery preparation had been ordered and arranged for 8.30 p.m. A battalion of the 247th R.I.R., of the 54th (Württemberg) Res. Divn. which held Dernancourt, had been lent as reserve to the 107th Divn., a division which, says the Württemberg historian, "we knew . . . since the beginning of the offensive, and knew that it was not in a condition to retake a lost trench." The history of the 52nd R.I.R. says that,

⁶² On the way he captured six Germans calmly getting their breath in a dugout.

⁶³ Capt. E. K. Keys, 57th Bn. Farmer; of Dandenong, Vic.; b. Keysborough, Vic., 24 Oct. 1889.

⁶⁴ Capt. R. Jennings, V.D.; 60th Bn. Linotype operator; of Caulfield, Vic.; b. South Yarra, Vic., 28 June 1884.

⁶⁵ One of Flintoft's posts was blown out but was replaced by a section of the 57th who (under Cpl. F. E. Beard, of Ararat, Vic.) swam across the river.

⁶⁶ The German bombardment, however, caused a severe loss in the Australian front line, where Lts. J. C. Moore (Beaufort, Vic.) and J. R. Ranson (Rockdale, N.S.W.) of the 15th and 8th L.T.M. Batteries, whose Stokes mortars were in that line, were killed. Moore was a picked officer of the 60th Bn., specially transferred by Elliott to the trench-mortar battery in the difficult situation caused by the issue of the inferior "blue ring" ammunition.

when the German artillery opened, "the English immediately replied with the strongest barrage, and the counter-attack could not be carried out." The effort was abandoned and the intermingled companies of the 52nd were eventually reorganised to hold the former support position as their new front.

Brig.-Genl. Elliott had been eager to undertake at this stage a raid with a company of the 60th Battalion against a terrace footing the hill north of Morlancourt, believed to be crowded with German supports. A reconnaissance by the battalion intelligence officer, Lieut. Stillman, however, now indicated that there were few if any Germans there, and the plan was abandoned.⁶⁷ The captured trench was quickly connected with the old front by two communication trenches which had been partly tunnelled beforehand as "Russian" saps.

Both the Battle of Hamel and the diversion at Ville were quickly over and completely successful. The total casualties of the attacking infantry were about 1,400, of which the 4th Brigade suffered 504, the 11th 312, the 6th 131, the 7th 115, the Americans 176, and the 15th Brigade at Ville 142.⁶⁸

The only German regiment on the Hamel front whose casualties are stated in the available records is that which faced the southern flank of the main attack, the 15th I.R., which lost 232 officers and men (of whom 199 were missing); all except 27 of these belonged to the forward battalion. At Ville the 52nd R.I.R. had 205 casualties (111 missing). Probably the total German loss considerably exceeded 2,000. All the battalions that had held the front line had to be temporarily reduced—in most cases to a single company. As usual

⁶⁷ Stillman was wounded on the reconnaissance.

⁶⁸ Particulars of the infantry casualties were:

| 4th Brigade | | | 11th Brigade | | | 6th Brigade | | |
|-------------|--------|------|--------------|--------|------|---------------------|--------|------|
| | Offrs. | O.R. | | Offrs. | O.R. | | Offrs. | O.R. |
| 13 Bn. | 8 | 118 | 41 Bn. | — | 7 | 21 Bn. | 3 | 52 |
| 14 Bn. | 2 | 53 | 42 Bn. | 3 | 48 | 23 Bn. | 5 | 70 |
| 15 Bn. | 9 | 231 | 43 Bn. | 7 | 90 | 6 T.M.Bty. | — | 1 |
| 16 Bn. | 5 | 73 | 44 Bn. | 5 | 149 | | | |
| 4 T.M. Bty. | — | 5 | 11 T.M.Bty. | 1 | 2 | | | |
| Total | 24 | 480 | Total | 16 | 296 | Total | 8 | 123 |
| 7th Brigade | | | 15th Brigade | | | 33rd American Divn. | | |
| | Offrs. | O.R. | | Offrs. | O.R. | | | |
| 25 Bn. | 3 | 90 | 57 Bn. | 1 | 10 | | | |
| Others | 2 | 20 | 58 Bn. | 2 | 39 | | 176 | |
| | | | 59 Bn. | 6 | 58 | | | |
| | | | 60 Bn. | 3 | 20 | | | |
| | | | 15 T.M.Bty. | 2 | 1 | | | |
| Total | 5 | 110 | Total | 14 | 128 | | | |

at this stage of the war, some of the defeated regiments were officially thanked in orders for having prevented the British from advancing farther—an intention which, of course, had never been entertained.

Haig noted that this battle greatly strengthened the British position on the Villers-Bretonneux ridge. It also weakened the German position. The German prisoners exceeded 1,600,⁶⁹ with two anti-tank machine-guns, 177 machine-guns, 32 trench-mortars, and a new anti-tank weapon of the German infantry, a gigantic and cumbersome rifle of .530-inch calibre,⁷⁰ fired from a bipod. The German trench divisions on the Hamel-Villers-Bretonneux front, starved of reinforcements, had long been deteriorating under the nightly fire of artillery and machine-guns and the bombings of the air force. This was proved by previously unheard-of conditions found by the attacking troops in the captured German positions. Of wire-entanglements there was little more than a few weak scattered belts; the trenches seemed to have been dug without planning; few deep dugouts had been added, although many had been begun and remained unfinished; and, on the southern flank, some of the living trenches had actually been used as open latrines. Brig.-Genl. Wisdom noted that the prisoners "were the poorest lot I have seen," and conjectured that the enemy was holding his line with his poorest troops. Doubtless "peaceful penetration" had added to the strain.

You bloody Australians (said an English-speaking prisoner quoted in Wisdom's report), when you are in the line you keep us on pins and needles; we never know when you are coming over.

But these troops at Hamel had hitherto held their defence system undislocated by local thrusts like those near Morlan-court. The Battle of Hamel set up there the same condition of nervousness that had existed since April among the Germans north of the Somme, who were in constant apprehension of another sharp blow, as the instant reply of their artillery and trench-mortars this day indicated. This strain of expectation henceforth extended to the whole German garrison facing the Australian Corps.

These results, moral and tactical, were not without important influence on future events. But, when all is said, the chief importance of the Battle of Hamel lay in its being an exercise

⁶⁹ 43 officers and 1,562 of other ranks.

⁷⁰ It was 5½ feet long, weighed 36½ lb., and was sighted up to 500 metres.

for the British command and troops for the offensive which all expected to occur when, that year or next, the balance of strength finally turned against the enemy. Hamel was a lesson in how to use the Mark V tank with aggressive infantry in breaking through German trench-lines on the Western Front. The method that resulted was neither that devised by the leaders of the Tank Corps, nor, in every item, that laid down by General Monash; it was evolved from these, in the actual battle, by the Australian infantry and the tank crews themselves. Obviously it did not permanently solve the problem of co-operation between tanks and infantry; if the speed of the tanks had far exceeded that of the infantry, the Hamel method might have involved an unnecessary waste of this advantage. But it did show an effective method of using with infantry those tanks with which the B.E.F. was likely to be furnished for the remainder of the war;⁷¹ and this, whether the fact was fully recognised at G.H.Q. or not, was one of the great problems then confronting the British command.

For such results as were attained at Hamel, both Tank Corps and infantry had to be daring and efficient. Hitherto it had been a definite disadvantage to the Tank Corps—and even, in some degree, to the general cause—that the Australian infantry since Bullecourt mistrusted both the tanks, and, to a certain extent, their crews. Two hours at Hamel completed a revolution in the Diggers' opinion, which never afterwards changed. Of the commanders of battalions that had suffered so disastrously at Bullecourt, Lieut.-Col. Drake Brockman (16th) reported that the tanks had, on certain occasions during the Hamel advance, proved "particularly useful and efficient." Lieut.-Col. McSharry (15th) says of one tank that it

saved us a great number of casualties at the final objective. This tank gave an ideal illustration of co-operation with infantry.

Lieut.-Col. Marks of the 13th Battalion reported:

I feel sure that tanks, when so ably used, could obviate the necessity for a final protective barrage and leave more scope for exploiting success. . . . They even appeared to anticipate the infantry's desires.

The American Capt. Gale with the 11th Brigade says that

⁷¹ The speed of the Mark V was only about five miles an hour, and that of the "Allied" tank (Mark VIII), which was to arrive in 1919, would be only about six miles.

the tanks did "wonderful work."⁷² The diary of the 6th Brigade says of the tanks:

Having seen them in action the infantry have a very high opinion of their work.

Other observers noted the attitude of the tank crews:

These tanks (says one diarist) . . . had the pick of their officers in them.⁷³ The tanks were determined to make a success of it.

Tank officers have recorded that the time fixed for zero hour, though allowing just light enough for them to see their way, was much too early to let them use their guns with advantage. But even when it was bright there were not many targets in this battle, and the tanks used less ammunition than was expected. It was found, so General Courage reported, that they could safely venture into a shrapnel barrage—which, indeed, gave "great protection" to the tanks from anti-tank machine-gun fire and from such weapons as the new giant rifle; the tanks therefore could lead the infantry and enable it to follow the barrage at a safe distance. But he also states that the infantry, with which this experiment had been made, was of first rate quality.

All tank officers were much impressed by the superb *moral* of the Australian troops, who never considered that the presence of tanks exonerated them from fighting, and took instant advantage of any opportunity created by the tanks.

It is, indeed, certain that without first class infantry the battle would have taken a different course. At the very outset, if the 15th Battalion had been content to follow its orders literally⁷⁴ and on meeting strong resistance at Pear Trench had lain down and awaited its tanks, the whole action would have been imperilled. Instead the battalion went at the redoubt unassisted, and by determined and skilful fighting took the obstacle in its stride. Later, as with the 13th and 16th Battalions at Vaire Wood, so elsewhere, when a tank was handy—as one generally was—the troops called for it; when none was there, they straightway fought down the enemy themselves.

⁷² Lt. Rinkliff and Sgt. Gottwald record that the tanks made "wonderful gaps through the wire which facilitated our advance." It was, however, noted in the 11th Bde. that in some parts, after the passage of a tank, the wire belt raised itself again sufficiently to become an obstacle.

⁷³ This was probably not the case, but tank personnel was now more carefully selected than before.

⁷⁴ See pp. 288-9.

In the second phase of the advance, when all the tanks had caught up and full daylight arrived, most of the obstacles were overcome by the aid of tanks, and these helped greatly in clearing the new No-Man's Land. On the other hand in much of the earliest fighting the tanks had no part. Tank Corps officers themselves extracted from prisoners of two German divisions the statement⁷⁵ that when the British bombardment began

they thought it was a raid and hid in their dugouts. Before the bombardment ceased, hostile infantry appeared in the trenches and called upon the men in the dugouts to surrender, which they did. None of the prisoners examined, who were in the front system, fired a shot in self-defence or saw our tanks until after they were captured.

It was noted that, the ground being dry, the smoke shells in the barrage rendered the mist unnecessarily thick. The smoke screens on the flanks, however, were invaluable and the immunity of the tanks after reaching the objective was due to them and to the protective barrage.⁷⁶

The second experiment—that of using half-trained American troops—was much less decisive, although advantage might perhaps have resulted later had its true lesson been grasped. The fine physique and character of the sixteen American platoons carried these raw troops, most of whom had never before seen the front line or heard a hostile shot, through their difficult task of playing their parts as units in a highly trained force in an elaborately organised modern battle. Australian commanders were full of appreciation for their spirit.

They were a good, hardworking, keen, intelligent lot of fellows who are likely to do well in the near future (wrote Capt. Moran of the 43rd.)

The Americans deserve special mention (reported Col. McSharry). They behaved magnificently but were rather too anxious to get close to the barrage—a very common fault with new troops.

Most reports were similar and apparently gave to the higher commanders the impression that the experiment was

⁷⁵ Here quoted from the war diary of the Tank Corps.

⁷⁶ The report of the commander of the German 43rd Res. Div. attributed the loss of Hamel to the lack of a good defensive system—the old French defences, he said, were unsuitable against an attack from the west. Shortage of labour had prevented the completion of a new line of resistance on the Wolfsberg. There was no lightly held forward zone ahead of the Hamel defences, and there was no word of the tanks having been seen before the action. The weakness of the troops, the thick smoke, and the continuous attacks from the air, weakening the reserves as they came up, all helped with the result. In reply to a special inquiry from the XI German Corps, the divisional commanders said that there was no need for an investigation to fix the blame on any troops or persons.

an almost unqualified success. Actually, however, some of the Americans platoons had a very trying experience. An Australian diarist says:

One American to whom we spoke (on the battlefield on July 4) seemed a little doubtful as to how his particular lot had done. He seemed to me to think that they had muddled a bit. He said, "If we had had a few more weeks of shell-fire, we might have been more used to it—I think the boys might have enjoyed themselves then."

The diarist adds, "The majority were well satisfied"; but it is certain that this man's experience was that of many. Col. Marks of the 13th, though, like all others, full of admiration for the Americans' spirit, reported that their inexperience led them to bunch together when advancing, with the result that one shell incapacitated nearly a whole squad. The men, said Marks, were well led by their officers, "cool, capable fellows," of whom at least two,⁷⁷ carried on to the objective after being wounded; but naturally the N.C.O's had not yet their full control, and some platoons when their officers fell were at a loss what to do. One platoon attached to the 13th strayed 100 yards into the territory of the 21st, but dug in there "most energetically"⁷⁸ on the objective. Some Americans, whose advance was to have ended with the ten-minutes halt and the mopping-up of Hamel, went on to the final objective.

Almost all our men were in the first wave with the Aussies (wrote the American who led another platoon) and were very much offended when told to stay thirty paces in rear of the final wave.

After the objective had been reached many Americans waited with natural anxiety for their first experience of heavy German bombardment, being specially apprehensive of being shelled during the night with gas, of which they did not even know the smell. When 'gas-shells' did come, they soon gained confidence in their gas-masks.

As training for the Americans—which was ostensibly the whole object of their inclusion—the experience was valuable. Capt. Gale wrote:

More real good was done to this company by this small operation with the Australians than could have been accomplished in months of training behind the lines.

⁷⁷ Lt. A. G. Jefferson (Oak Park, U.S.A.), 131st Inf. Regt., and Lt. M. M. Komorowski (Cicero, U.S.A.), 132nd Inf. Regt. (Both were awarded the M.C. Jefferson, who died on 12 Oct. 1937, also received the D.S.C.).

⁷⁸ Quoted from the report of the 6th Bde.

If the lesson could have been postponed until these Americans had obtained some experience of the front, it might have resulted in more profit and slighter loss. But, as matters turned out, such an opportunity would not have arisen before the 131st Infantry had to be launched into more serious fighting at Gressaire Wood in August. For these troops the experience of Hamel therefore was all to the good. Nevertheless it did not prove that partly trained troops even of the finest quality could be wisely employed on the Western Front except in an extreme emergency.

But Hamel was more than a parcel of separate experiments with tanks, Americans, and aeroplanes; it was also a trial of a surprise offensive carried out with John Monash's methods of infinite care in co-ordination of the several arms—after preliminary discussion and his own lucid exposition in conference. Haig, who on July 1st had visited Monash to talk over the coming operation, noted:

Monash is a most capable commander, who thinks out every detail of any operation and leaves nothing to chance.

The lessons of the battle were studied afterwards at special conferences of officers who had taken part—one conference concerning the tank tactics and one the artillery arrangements. G.H.Q. eventually published two accounts of it for the guidance of commanders generally. Both these papers insist on the importance of bearing in mind, when making deductions from this experience, the high morale of the attacking infantry.⁷⁹ But a conviction expressed over nearly every Aus-

⁷⁹S.S. No. 218, *Operations by the Australian Corps Against Hamel, Bois de Hamel, and Bois de Vaire*, published in July 1918, gives a summary of the orders and events and concludes:—

"The success of the attack was due:

- (a) To the care and skill as regards every detail with which the plan was drawn up by the Corps, Division, Brigade, and Battalion staffs.
- (b) The excellent co-operation between the infantry, machine-gunners, artillery, tanks, and R.A.F.
- (c) The complete surprise of the enemy resulting from the manner in which the operation had been kept secret up till zero hour.
- (d) The precautions which were taken and successfully carried out, by which no warning was given to the enemy by any previous activity which was not normal.
- (e) The effective counter-battery work and accurate barrage.
- (f) The skill and dash with which the tanks were handled, and the care taken over details in bringing them up to the starting line.
- (g) Last, but most important of all, the skill, determination, and fine fighting spirit of the infantry carrying out the attack."

Notes on Recent Fighting, No. 19, a shorter account, published with G.H.Q. Intelligence Summary on 5 August 1918, concludes that success was "largely due to the determination of the infantry and to the able tactical handling of platoons. The infantry fought its way forward making use of its own weapons, when the

tralian mess tin was not included in these reports—that the Diggers could now go through to the enemy's guns, and that to stop short, and allow those batteries to retire and open again on the troops digging in, was sheer waste of good effort.⁸⁰

Most of the troops that had made the attack were quickly relieved⁸¹—the Americans first, on the evening of July 5th.

We hiked back (wrote Sgts. Peters⁸² and Reece,⁸³ 131st Infantry) receiving compliments from every Aussie we met.

After a good breakfast, an Aussie stew, and speeches and cheers (says an Australian diary), the 43rd Bn. sent its American company away. . . . Some of the Americans ran away and hid when we were told to fetch them. Several put up the colours of the battalion they were with, and are wearing them still.

The Australian battalion to which that company had been attached came out of the line on the night of the 6th, "very tired," says one of its officers, "but very proud of our victory and of our Yankee pals that were with us." One Australian company commander ended his report to his colonel: "United States troops are now classified as Diggers."⁸⁴

The feint attacks certainly misled the enemy at the time into the belief that he was being attacked along most of the front from Villers-Bretonneux to Ville. But as often happened it was the troops engaged in the feints that had the most severe trial. The heavy loss in the 55th Battalion's raid has been noticed. And at Ville the shallow advance of the 15th

co-operation of other arms was not available. It is important in drawing deductions from this action to bear in mind the local and special conditions, especially the high moral of the infantry, the fact that there was not much wire, that the ground was suitable for the action of tanks, and that the objective was strictly limited and within the effective fire of the field and heavy artillery as sited for the attack."

⁸⁰ Gen. Cannan, for example, commented that "the minimum objective" in such an attack "should be the enemy's gun line." The diary of the 5th Bde., A.F.A., says: "It is universally felt by our officers and men engaged in this sort of operation that we do not attack on a sufficiently large scale, we never attempt to capture his artillery."

⁸¹ The 4th Bde., however, continued until July 10 to hold a narrow sector facing Accroche Wood.

⁸² Lt. W. J. Peters, 131st Amer. Inf. Regt. Clerk; of Chicago, U.S.A.; b. Chicago, 17 Feb. 1896.

⁸³ Sgt. H. L. Reece, No. 1,386,777; 131st Amer. Inf. Regt. Clerk; of Chicago, U.S.A.; b. South Bend, Indiana, U.S.A., 14 July 1895.

⁸⁴ It appears that some Americans learned from the Australians more skills than their commanders intended. Capt. Gale reported: "In the taking of German prisoners a tendency was noted on the part of Australian troops to an entire disregard for the personal property, rights of prisoners of war; they stripping them as a rule of anything of value. It is feared that some of our troops followed this along as an example." (*The History of the 33rd Division, A.E.F., Vol. II, p. 367.*) This apprehension was well grounded; an Australian diary records that two Americans asked Maj. Lott of the 43rd, when a prisoner came by, "May we have a button, sir?" Lott nodded his head, and "within a minute there was not a button on him (the German)."

Brigade in no way dislocated the local German artillery, which then for two days kept up a slow heavy bombardment of the narrow front of that operation.⁸⁵ Several posts were blown out on the night of the 4th,⁸⁶ and a bombardment during the relief of the 60th Battalion two nights later caused a number of casualties.⁸⁷ Like the other four Australian divisions, the 5th had been bearing the strain of an active front almost continuously since the March offensive, and there were definite signs that some of the troops were becoming seriously overdone.

The victory at Hamel, however, received wide appreciation. The stroke, though "not such a great battle,"⁸⁸ was the most thoroughly successful undertaken by the Allies since the German offensive—General Elles of the Tank Corps afterwards described it as "certainly the most successfully executed small battle of all arms" within his experience—and congratulations poured in. It happened that the Supreme War Council was sitting at Versailles when the news of the victory arrived. Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Orlando were at the meeting and, at various times, Balfour, Milner, Sonnino, Pichon, Pershing, Foch, Sir Henry Wilson, and Haig. Lloyd George and the Prime Ministers of Canada, New Zealand, and Newfoundland asked Mr Hughes to telegraph to General Monash their congratulations. Clemenceau was directing a secretary to send his also, when "No," he said, "I'll go and see them and congratulate them myself." And on the following Sunday the "Tiger," then 77 years of age, made his weekly excursion with General Mordacq, not, as was his wont, to some French division, but to headquarters of the 4th Australian Division at Bussy-les-Daours near Corbie. Standing in his neat brown suit and small crumpled felt hat in the centre of a ring roughly formed by a number of the Australians⁸⁹ who had fought the battle, he spoke to them in English:

⁸⁵ Capt. Keys reported that his company sergeant-major, R. H. Drysdale (Kallista, Vic.), was "a tower of strength" throughout this.

⁸⁶ One platoon, in charge of Cpl. W. W. Bennett (57th), was temporarily shelled out by the supporting artillery. (The platoon commander, Lt. J. H. Fleming, and Sgt. C. J. Angus had been previously hit.) Another post, under Sgt. F. H. Tyler, was hit by a German shell, but was replaced by a section from north of the Ancre. (Bennett belonged to Melbourne; Fleming to Elphinstone, Vic.; Angus to Williamstown, Vic.; Tyler to Middle Park, Vic.)

⁸⁷ Including the death of another of Elliott's picked young officers, Lt. M. D. Knight (St. Kilda, Vic.).

⁸⁸ The words are those of Clemenceau.

⁸⁹ With Clemenceau were Gen. Mordacq and M. René Renault, President of the French War Council. They were met at Bussy by Rawlinson, Monash, and most of the Australian leaders.

. . . . When the Australians came to France, the French people expected a great deal of you. . . . We knew that you would fight a real fight, but we did not know that from the very beginning you would astonish the whole continent. . . . I shall go back to-morrow and say to my countrymen: "I have seen the Australians. I have looked in their faces. I know that these men . . . will fight alongside of us again until the cause for which we are all fighting is safe for us and for our children."

As the old man panted, partly from emotion, partly from asthma, General MacLagan, taking up a call from one of the Diggers behind him, led three tremendous cheers for France. "De jolis enfants," said Clemenceau, as he turned to go.⁹⁰

The one Allied leader who, not unnaturally, must have found his pleasure in the news of Hamel not unmixed with annoyance was General Pershing. As he had given most positive instructions that American troops were not to take part,

it was . . . somewhat of a surprise (he writes) to learn on the following day that four American companies of the 33rd Division had taken part in the attack.

To avoid his agreement with Haig being again broken by the action of their respective subordinates, he gave orders (as he informed Haig) "that until the completion of the training period all propositions concerning the use of these troops be referred to my headquarters."⁹¹ Haig, on Rawlinson's asking him for a definite ruling, laid down that American units attached to the British for training would "act as integral parts of the British units to which they are attached"; they could take part in any fighting in which those units were involved, but must not be specially attached for the purpose of taking part.⁹²

⁹⁰ Gen. Mordacq (in *Le Ministère Clemenceau, Vol. II, p. 109*) says the visit was "a very great success," and Clemenceau received "an enormous ovation."

⁹¹ It will be remembered that Fourth Army H.Q. understood that this had been done. (See p. 262.)

⁹² According to an instruction from Gen. Read to Gen. Bell the arrangement authorised by American G.H.Q. was that "at any time in case any emergency arise" the American troops training with the British would be under British tactical command.

CHAPTER X

"PEACEFUL PENETRATION"—ITS CLIMAX ON THE SOMME

AFTER a successful battle on a great scale, even on the strongest fronts in France and Gallipoli, there usually followed at least a few hours in which the foremost infantry of the attacking side were uncertain as to precisely where the outposts of their opponents would be found. The successful infantry would have suddenly burst into the trenches, or sunken roads, of an area which, till the last few hours, had been forbidden and unknown ground to them; as unattainable as the sources of the Amazon, or the mountains of the South Pole. Around them would lie evidences of the enemy garrisons that recently had barred the entrance to the forbidden part of the world—equipment marked with strange initials; food or tobacco from the region that navies above or below water were trying to starve; letters and postcards in foreign tongue from the people there, telling those at headquarters who could read them of conditions as to which the Allies longed to discover the truth. Behind or on either flank would lie the reverse sides of slopes and ridges of which, till then, the advancing side had seen only the motionless, expressionless fronts. And here or there, from the trench or road occupied, there would lead out another trench or a cross-road—often overgrown with grass, sometimes recently trodden, sometimes long unused—into the country in which, somewhere, the enemy now lay. Such trenches would have been blocked as a matter of course, forty or fifty yards ahead, by the victorious troops during consolidation, generally with two successive barricades, and guards stationed behind the rearmost of these. But patrols would have gone cautiously along them as far as the protective barrage allowed; and, at least where the invaders were Australian troops, the need for obtaining infor-

mation, reinforced by curiosity, the itch for adventure, and an overpowering eagerness for souvenirs to take home to Australia, would lead enterprising spirits to thrust far down them, welcoming risks with the spirit of explorers for whom unknown dangers might lie behind any corner or rise.

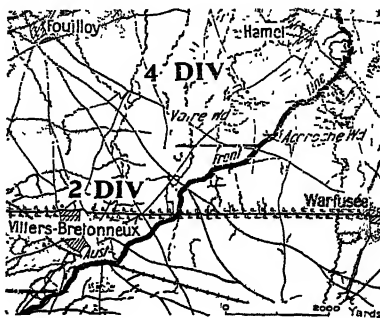
After comparatively minor actions, such as that of Hamel, this interval for adventure had usually been short; the front soon became closed by two lines of outposts¹ whose alertness and instant shooting rendered patrolling highly dangerous. Even though by July 1918 both sides were holding their foremost lines much more thinly than hitherto, the outposts were ordered to be so placed that movement screened from one would come under deadly machine-gun fire from its neighbours. But the green crops covering much of the country and now two or three feet high greatly impeded the view.² They were cut as soon as possible by the garrisons on both sides, working at night with sickles, but as a rule only for twenty or thirty yards in front of the posts. The Australians—commanders and men—who in May had been distinctly apprehensive of the danger of the crops screening German attacks, were now finding that, on the contrary, opportunity was constantly being given to themselves to prowl round the posts of their opponents. If the German posts were well sited and the garrisons alert, the procedure was always dangerous, but it was difficult for either side to ensure alertness throughout the long, hot summer days.

On the day after the Battle of Hamel it was quickly evident to many Australians in the outpost-line that the German front was unusually disorganised. Nowhere in recent months had the Germans here dug or wired any rear line of defence—the only system deserving the name was the line of old French works which still reached out across the country. The defences in the foreground were mainly small bits of old British or German trench dug without system and generally unpro-

¹ In earlier years of the war the lines would have been continuously garrisoned trenches.

² And also the range of bullets. Experiments by Second Army proved that through 60 yards of green, dry crop only 57 per cent. of bullets apparently penetrated, and of these most were deflected in their direction. Through 200 yards of crop only 8.5 penetrated. If the crop was wet, the protection it afforded was even greater.

tected by wire. The right of the Hamel advance had cut diagonally across a number of these on the portion of the Villers-Bretonneux plateau that lay north of the Roman road; and here, where the tanks on the previous day had thoroughly disconcerted the enemy's small posts and groups, the Australians for some days found the best region for their excursions.



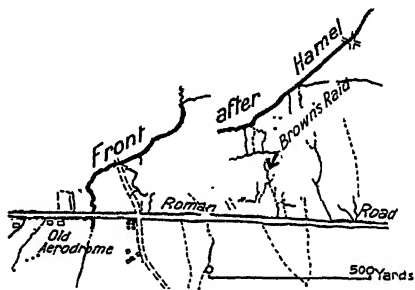
The view was limited by a slight crest 200 yards ahead of the new posts; beyond it a depression led down northwards to the steep gully at Accroche Wood. Several of the old German communication trenches ran into the depression, and on the morning of July 6th two Victorian snipers, in search of a good position, moved out along one of these saps until they came on a German, obviously the sentry, asleep. They shot him, but the position was too dangerous for them to occupy. In the meantime, however, the chief staff officer of the 2nd Division, Lieut.-Col. Miles,³ who on July 5th went round the new front, and the commanders of the front-line battalions of the 6th and 7th Brigades, who had met and conferred there, decided that the outposts should be advanced in order to secure a better view. Maj. Reed⁴ of the 21st himself went a long way down another sap, and during the afternoon of the 5th, while the snipers kept watch for any Germans that showed their heads, parties advanced along all the trenches running towards the enemy in this area and established posts in them 200-300 yards out and others in the open between these. One of the parties of the 21st, after thus penetrating a small trench-system 700 yards north of the Roman road, came into fire of a German machine-gun post; Lieut. Weir and his platoon rushed the posi-

³ Lt.-Gen. C. G. N. Miles, C.M.G., D.S.O., p.s.c. G.S.O. (1), 2nd Aust. Div., 1918; Commandant, Royal Military College, Duntroon, 1935-39; Adjutant-General, Australia, 1939. Officer of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Brisbane; b. Brisbane, 10 Nov. 1884.

⁴ Lt.-Col. A. E. Reed, D.S.O., V.D.; 21st Bn. Accountant; of Melbourne; b. Clunes, Vic., 29 Mar. 1888.

tion after dark, the Germans withdrawing before them. The 7th Brigade had similarly pushed down part of the trenches south of the Roman road.

The 6th (Victoria) Brigade was to be relieved next day by the 5th (N. S. Wales), and, during the night while the Victorian garrisons were digging and settling into the new positions, the advance parties of the New South Welsh battalions (a few representatives of each company and of battalion headquarters) arrived at the front. Next morning one of the incomers, Sergt. Walter Brown⁵ of the 20th Battalion, was walking round the trench seized by Weir's party when a sergeant of the 21st, with whom he was hobnobbing, told him that his men were still being troubled by German snipers in some position close "over there." After waiting in vain for half an hour for these Germans to disclose themselves by firing another shot, Brown



walked on along the empty trench saying that he would see if he could "have a pot at them" himself. The trench soon became shallow, and seventy yards across the open, in the direction which the Victorian sergeant had indicated, he saw a mound. Presently a shot was fired, apparently from the mound. Guessing that this place was the source of the trouble, Brown decided to go out to it. He dropped his rifle, picked up two Mills bombs, and ran towards it. As he went another shot was fired—he was not sure whether he was the target. He stopped and threw a bomb at the mound, hoping that it would kill or scare any Germans there while he made his rush, but it fell short. Dropping down in some broken ground, he waited to see what would happen. As several minutes passed

⁵ Sgt. W. E. Brown, V.C., D.C.M. (No. 1689; 20th Bn.; and NX35,492; 2nd/15th Fld. Regt., A.I.F., 1940). Grocer; of Hobart, Tas., and Petersham, N.S.W.; b. New Norfolk, Tas., 2 July 1885.

and the place remained without sound or movement, he got up and ran to it.

He found himself standing over one end of a small, kidney-shaped trench, empty, but with the entrance of a dugout gaping towards him at its far end and a machine-gun standing on the parapet in the middle, its belt trailing from the breech. Brown jumped into the trench and ran to reach the dugout entrance before any one could emerge. As he reached it a German appeared in the entrance and began to step from it. Brown swung a blow at his jaw, and the German, crying "Kamerad" as it struck him, was knocked down the stair. Brown backed to the machine-gun, holding his only bomb ready to throw. At this moment, probably hearing movement behind him, he turned and received a surprise: at the other end of the trench, where he had jumped in, was another dugout entrance and Germans just emerging from it. He could not throw his bomb, for when it had burst he would have been at the mercy of the survivors. He therefore held it threateningly—and they at once put up their hands. He ordered them to pass out over the parapet, which they did, scowling, while he perforce kept turning his head so as to watch first one entrance and then the other. Thirteen Germans in all emerged and trotted across to the Australian line, some German post opening with a machine-gun as they went, and Brown following the prisoners, bomb in hand. The Victorians took charge of them. Presently German shells began to burst around.

Actually Brown had captured an officer and twelve men of the 137th I.R. (108th Divn.). They belonged to its I Bn. and on the day of the Hamel attack had been holding the support-line posts. After that battle these posts found themselves to be the front line. The one captured by Brown appears to have been subsequently thrust farther forward; it had not been rationed since the battle, and the spirit of its garrison was low.

Brown himself, unaware even that there was an officer among his captives, picked up his rifle, went back to his "pozy," and dismissed the incident from his mind—so far as he was allowed to do so by some of the men in the trench who growled that he had "drawn the crabs"⁶ on them. Nevertheless word of the incident spread like fire, for an officer of

⁶ Soldier slang for drawing shell-fire.

the 21st presently came along the trench and asked him if he was the man who had gone out. Later when his own battalion, the 20th, came in, his company commander, Lieut. Cameron,⁷ asked: "What the devil have you been doing up there?" The incident was quickly known in every part of the corps. The 1st Australian Division at Hazebrouck heard it. As will presently be seen, General Monash made it the basis of a direction to all his divisions.

But, while the unconscious subject of these reports was sitting quietly in his niche in the ground,⁸ some probing of trenches by individual Diggers continued and in the afternoon a small German post near Accroche Wood was rushed.

The 265th R.I.R. (108th Divn.), south of the Roman road, noted that Hill 104 "seethed with Tommies, probably staffs who wanted to get their bearings." The regimental history recording this fact says that the British attacked the 137th in the afternoon. The historian of the 15th I.R. (13th Divn.) farther north says that the Australians made new thrusts at 9.30 (probably Brown's sortie), 10.30, and 11 o'clock, all being defeated, and "Tommy" in the last case being "sent home with bloody heads."⁹

Actually any Australian activity was purely the work of single men or small parties continuing on local initiative the activity of the previous day.

Much more important undertakings were, indeed, simmering in the minds of some of the higher leaders. The advances at Hamel and Ville were barely over before plans for repeating those successes were suggested by Hobbs, Monash, and Rawlinson. Actually, on the day of the Battle of Hamel, General Hobbs suggested for the next project an advance on

**Plan for
another
Hamel**

⁷ Brig. C. E. Cameron, M.C.; 20th Bn. Clerk; of Turramurra, N.S.W.; b. Balmain, N.S.W., 13 Sep. 1894.

⁸ Brown was awarded the Victoria Cross. He had been previously decorated. after Passchendaele, and was indeed the type of man certain to distinguish himself in this way if he survived. Born at New Norfolk, Tasmania, in 1885, and working as a grocer when the war broke out, he had enlisted in the infantry, but, in order to get to the front more quickly, seized a chance of transfer to the light horse and then, on arrival in Egypt, entered the camel corps. When serving with this corps in Egypt, being determined to reach the infantry in France, he managed to be sent to Cairo on a plea of having lost his false teeth. At Cairo he succeeded in obtaining a transfer to the 20th Bn. reinforcements, and, after serving in the 55th Bn. at Flers, and for a short while in a field butchery, he was transferred in August 1917 to the 20th Bn.

⁹ The German account says that after this the "English" came out with Red Cross flags and, "in spite of the misuse of the flag which we had already experienced with this opponent," the bearers were allowed to work unharmed.

the Morlancourt heights and the raiding of that village. He proposed that the troops for this purpose should be obtained by reinforcing his division with two American battalions distributed by platoons, and at the same time transferring the Ville sector to the III Corps. General Monash immediately rejected the proposal on the ground that its achievement was beyond the available resources of the corps, especially in artillery, and that undertakings elsewhere offered more valuable and attractive results.¹⁰ He considered, however, that a more restricted operation on Morlancourt heights might be worthy of consideration later, and asked Hobbs to prepare plans for it.

On July 7th Monash wrote to Rawlinson:

There are under consideration several tempting proposals for exerting further pressure upon the enemy for the improvement of our position. . . .

They could not, however, be entertained, because the infantry holding his front was some 4,000 fewer than when it took over the sector. He therefore asked that the III Corps, whose front was much more densely held, should take over the sector of his northern brigade.

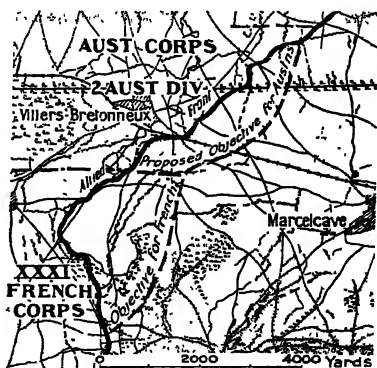
This was not then possible; but there was one project favoured by both Monash and Rawlinson, which might ultimately have a similar effect. This was an advance by the right of the Australian Corps in order to straighten the bight now existing in its line on the plateau in front of Villers-Bretonneux, south of the bulge created by the Hamel advance. The ground there was suitable for tanks, which would help to lessen casualties. Indeed, though the corps was being worn down by constant activity, Rawlinson and Monash both considered that the repetition of such strokes as the Battle of Hamel would be justifiable employment for it. Moreover both of them hoped that the line would ultimately be shortened (though, as will be explained, temporarily lengthened) by the proposed operation. Rawlinson therefore urged it upon Haig, when he met him prior to an army commanders' conference on

¹⁰ Other reasons were that the III Corps could not then carry out the relief, that the objective was too shallow for tanks to be used with advantage, and that the mere raiding of Morlancourt was too unimportant an achievement for such an effort. Br.-Gen. Elliott wished to take Morlancourt by the method he constantly urged, of "pinching it out."

July 5th. The commander-in-chief refused; the proposal, he said, would extend the line at a moment when reserves were very small. He told Rawlinson nevertheless to prepare a statement of the plan.

Further formal attacks being thus for the moment ruled out, Monash resorted to other methods, presently to be described. Meanwhile, after discussion on July 6th with Maj.-General Rosenthal of the 2nd Division, he drew up, and on July 7th sent to Rawlinson, the written statement of the plan for which Haig had asked. It made clear that the main object was to shorten the line by filling in not only the re-entrant on the Australian front, south of Hamel, but the deep gulf existing on the Australian right as the result of the German success against the exhausted divisions of the Fourth Army in the attacks on Villers-Bretonneux. Most of this indentation was now held by the French, who after the second German attack had taken over the line to a point near Monument Wood.¹¹

The great difficulty in the way of straightening this front was that of arranging for simultaneous action by the two allies. Monash therefore recommended that the process should be undertaken by each separately, the Australian Corps advancing its front first. This advance would render much easier that of the French, which should follow "after a very short interval of time." It was, however, urgent that the French should not fail to act, since otherwise the Australian thrust would result in "an awkward, and, in some aspects, a very undesirable salient." Monash's plan therefore suggested two objectives: the first (known as the "Red Line") "to be considered only as the first stage of a comprehensive operation" to be achieved by the Australian Corps; in the



¹¹ See Vol. V, p. 644.

second stage of that operation, to follow as soon as possible afterwards, the XXXI French Corps would gain the "Blue Line." The Australian Corps front on the Red Line would be 4,500 yards in extent, but when the French came up it would be reduced to 3,000. The Australian attack would be carried out with the methods employed at Hamel, a battalion of tanks and nine brigades of field artillery taking part. Very careful preparation would be necessary in order to disguise the front of attack.¹² The corps would be ready to deliver it on July 17th.

In forwarding this plan to Haig on July 9th Rawlinson said that it had originally been suggested that the allies should attack simultaneously,

but, from past experience of the difficulties of fitting in times and dates suitable to both armies, I am very averse to this, and would much prefer the arrangements whereby the Australian attack will be put in some three or four days previous to the French attack.

Before writing to G.H.Q., Rawlinson had seen the commander of the First French Army, General Debeney. At the moment Debeney's preoccupation obviously was with another and probably, to the French, more important re-entrant, where the Germans had penetrated across the Avre between Castel and Moreuil, and he was intending to attack there in a few days' time. "If this is successful," Rawlinson wrote, "and especially if the Australian operation is successful," Debeney would probably agree to Monash's plan; in an endeavour to overcome Debeney's initial reluctance, Rawlinson had promised to lend him tanks. Rawlinson added that he was "very anxious" for the French to advance, as it would shorten the Australian front by nearly a mile, "which is of very considerable importance to the Corps."

At this stage of the war there was available to commanders of Australian troops another method of carrying out on many parts of the front fairly extensive operations
Meanwhile— —Joffre would have called these "nibbling,"
"Nibbling" and there is certainly no better exemplification
 of that principle than in this process, invented and initiated by

¹² Monash added: "It is hoped that, in this, novel expedients will suggest themselves after fuller consideration of the matter."

the Australian troops themselves, of "peaceful penetration."¹³ General Monash was as impressed as were the front-line troops by the disorganisation evidently created in the local German front by the Battle of Hamel, and on July 6th Sergt. Brown's sortie furnished additional proof of it. In circularising an account of that exploit to the troops on the day of its occurrence,¹⁴ Monash said:

An examination of these prisoners showed to a striking degree the state of utter demoralisation to which the enemy troops had been brought as the result of our operations. It was difficult to imagine men exhibiting greater dejection and a poorer morale. . . . They had been sent forward aimlessly to assist in forming an outpost-line to cover the remainder of their battalion. They had been left without food or water and utterly cut off, not knowing either our situation or that of their own troops. They were indeed quite helpless and fell an easy prey to our enterprise.

Examination of other prisoners, the circular added, had disclosed that similar confusion existed at other points and extended a considerable distance to the rear. Monash stated that he wished regimental officers to be aware of these conditions

in order to stimulate them to spare no effort, immediately after a battle, to exploit our successes to the utmost by the incessant harassing of the enemy and the mopping up of small posts.

At the same time, in conference on July 6th and 7th, he told Maj.-General Rosenthal that, although his troops at Villers-Bretonneux must not undertake any operations likely to cause severe casualties, they should endeavour to push forward posts wherever possible. There was some evidence that the two German divisions facing the right of the Australian Corps were being relieved.¹⁵ The most favourable time for pressure should therefore be the next few days, before the new divisions were well acquainted with the ground. Rosenthal issued an order to his brigades, informing them of the objective—the "Red

¹³ The process was, of course, also separately discovered by others. For example, four British soldiers at Pacaut Wood on June 15 cleared several German posts, capturing 20 Germans and 2 machine-guns. Doubtless all dominion troops also used the method, which was known to the British as "winkling" (extracting wrinkles from their shells). German regimental histories also tell of occasional German feats of this kind. But when all is said it was never, so far as is known, practised in a manner comparable to its use by the Australians and New Zealanders.

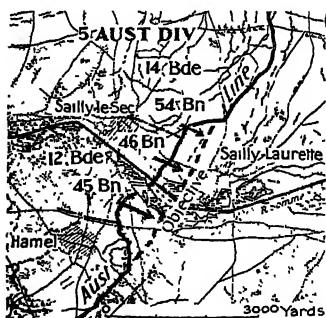
¹⁴ The circular refers to Brown as a man "of the 21st Battalion," this being the unit that had reported the incident.

¹⁵ They were the 13th and 108th. The 108th was in fact relieved a few days later. The 13th remained in the line.

Line"—which the divisions might be set to reach in a full-dress attack in the near future, and adding that its ultimate attainment would be materially helped by immediate attempts to push forward by patrolling. This meant that the brigadiers must take steps to infuse a definite purpose and additional vigour into the peaceful penetration that was already being carried out by their troops.

This nibbling was also in progress along the rest of the corps front where, in the days following Hamel, two other minor objects were being sought: first, to straighten the re-entrant left on the flats and southern slope of the Somme Valley between the northern end of the Hamel advance and the line on the Morlancourt heights; second, to push forward a few posts west of Accroche Wood so as to get a better view of the slope down which the wood lay. The advance on the flats was made by the two front-line battalions of the 12th Brigade in a small operation on a front of 2,500 yards astride of the Somme on the night of July 7th, as follows:

South of the river, where two companies of the 45th (N.S.Wales) made the attack, no opposition was expected, and, though several small German posts were met, none resisted. The companies making forward in the dark on the hillside south of the river found a dump of German barbed-wire with the necessary screw pickets, which greatly helped for wiring the new posts. Under cover of a party stationed 100 yards ahead, the whole of the 45th dug the posts or carried or erected the wire, and in the early morning a platoon of the 50th connected the 45th's right with the 50th's left, high on the Hamel ridge.¹⁶ North of the river, where two companies of 46th (Vic.) advanced, lay German posts which were expected to offer resistance. The artillery and Stokes mortar barrage was, however, very good and the Germans, after throwing a few bombs, ran back. Close beyond the objective was found a more troublesome post under a German company sergeant-major. It was rushed on the following night by a platoon under Lt. Pinsent.¹⁷ Farther north, on the flank of the 5th Divn., a German



¹⁶ Much difficulty was experienced in adjusting the protective barrage so as to clear the connecting post.

¹⁷ I.t. H. C. Pinsent, 46th Bn. Packer; of Fitzroy, Vic.; b. Fitzroy, 4 July 1894.

post, reconnoitred by the company commander, Capt. McNab, and Lt. Pickup,¹⁸ on the night before, was taken by a party of McNab's company led by Pickup.¹⁹ The line now ran close in front of the Sailly-Laurette cemetery, where the 44th Bn. had received a sharp knock in its night attack on March 28.²⁰ The Australian casualties in the whole advance were about 70. North of the Somme 24 unwounded prisoners of the 201st R.I.R. (43rd Res. Divn.) were taken.

The posts opposite Accroche Wood were pushed forward on the same night by the 16th Battalion, which had recently relieved the 13th. The night being disturbed with heavy shell-fire,²¹ the work was unfinished but one post was maintained forward to deny the ground to the enemy. Crops of wheat close by the post, however, rendered its tenure somewhat precarious. At 11.30 next morning it was heavily bombarded with *minenwerfer* and by rifle-grenadiers who crept up amid the wheat. The garrison, after half of its twelve men were killed or wounded, withdrew to shell-holes in rear and opened fire on the Germans when, a few minutes later, they raided the trench. The Germans swept the place with machine-gun fire during the day, and at dusk the Western Australians, having lost two more men, made their way back to the old firing line. That night patrols tried to recover the bodies of the dead from the now empty post, but the rustling of the crop twice advertised their close approach and strong German patrols prevented their reaching the ground. General Brand decided to abandon the effort to advance the posts, but a week later, after the 3rd Division had relieved the 4th, the task was again undertaken by the inner flanks of the 39th (Victorian) and 40th (Tasmanian) Battalions (10th Brigade). The companies pushed out during the night of July 14th and, with covering parties ahead, two new posts were dug for the flank of each battalion.²² But the difficulties were as great as before. One of the posts of the 39th lay in a cleared patch between two belts of crop. At 10.30 in the morning it was suddenly fired on by a machine-gun from the crop on the right. A Lewis gunner, Pte. John-

¹⁸ Lt. F. A. Pickup, 54th Bn. Clerk; of Windsor, N.S.W.; b. Windsor, 21 Jan. 1898.

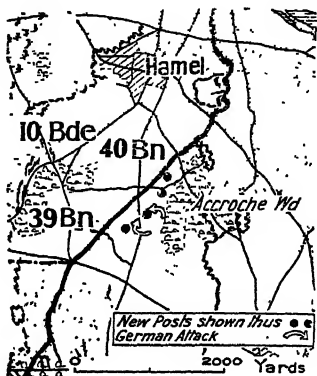
¹⁹ Both McNab and Pickup were slightly wounded, but went on with their work. The left flank was protected by a patrol under Lt. J. D. MacGregor (Sydney).

²⁰ See Vol. V, pp. 223-4.

²¹ Due to the 12th Bde.'s advance astride the Somme.

²² Those for the 40th were dug by parties from the 37th (Vic.).

ston,²³ turned his gun on the enemy, but stick-bombs now came over from the crop on the left, killing one man, wounding several, and damaging the gun. Sergt. McEwan,²⁴ in command of the post, withdrew his men including the wounded, himself covering their retirement by firing from the hip with a Lewis gun. The other post of the 39th also withdrew. Both were re-established the same afternoon and were not again attacked by the Germans. But the incident is notable as almost the only one in which the enemy successfully used against the Australians the tactics which were now, daily—in the north often hourly—used against him by the Australians.



For by now on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau there had developed a state of affairs which two months before, when the 48th Battalion made its gallant, costly attempt to seize the Monument Farm and grounds, would have been beyond belief. General Monash's order—to see what could be done there by peaceful penetration—had caused Brig.-Genl. Wisdom of the 7th Brigade to meet Lieut.-Col. Chalmers of the 27th Battalion (South Australia) on July 7th at the front line where it crossed the Villers-Bretonneux-Marcelcave railway. The plateau on which they looked out was covered mainly with green crops—largely with wheat two or three feet high; but except for the tops of distant woods most of the eastern landscape was screened by a slight swelling of the ground 150 yards east of them and also on their right, south of the railway cutting, where, beyond a small belt of wheat, protruded the broken stumps and hedges of the Monument Farm orchard

²³ Pte. J. E. Johnston (No. 486; 39th Bn.). Butcher; of Redbank, Vic.; b. Redbank, 23 June 1894. Died 19 Apr. 1920.

²⁴ Lt. F. J. McEwan, M.M., 39th Bn. Hotel keeper; of Ararat, Vic.; b. Homebush, Vic., 1883.

(universally called "Monument Wood") together with the ruins of the little 1870 memorial and of the big farm. On this swelling, which curved far round to the right rear towards Hangard Wood, lay the German outposts. The nearest of them was in the crop immediately north of the cutting, and the whole scene was so still under the hot summer sun that, as Wisdom afterwards said, he

felt that for half a pin he would go over and look at them himself. He asked Chalmers if he thought he could have a go at them.²⁵

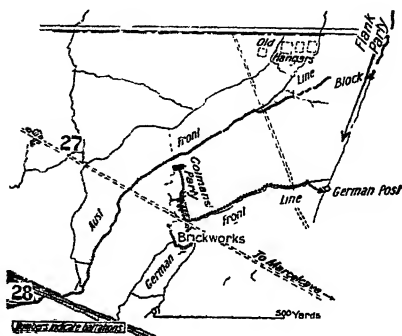
The general's enthusiasm as to the chance of a daylight raid induced Chalmers to send for a likely officer, the youngest in the battalion, Lieut. Colman,²⁶ an Adelaide student who (with a couple of air-photographs that were passed to him) examined the German front line, first from a house-top in Villers-Bretonneux. It seemed to him that the best chance of reaching the German line without being fired on—the only hope of success—was offered by the existence in front of it of an old orchard, immediately north of the road to Marcelcave. He had often watched this place bombed by the Australian heavy trench-mortars, and he now crept carefully out through the wheat, two feet high, until suddenly stopped by the sight of a parapet close ahead, and on it a German helmet. Watching for any other sign of the enemy, he waited for hours until a vast explosion between him and his own line warned him that the heavy trench-mortars were at work again. He had passed in the crop an old trench to which his party could creep during the coming night, to wait there for the chosen hour—10 a.m. He accordingly returned to tell his colonel that he would "give it a go." A small flanking party was to come down from the position won on July 4th by the 25th Battalion in the old German front line farther north²⁷ and endeavour to join him. The battalion staff obviously thought the scheme a wild one; if held up, Colman was to get his party back as best he could and an attack would be made later with proper artillery preparation.

²⁵ The quotation is from the diary of an Australian to whom Wisdom described the incident a few days later.

²⁶ Lt. W. R. G. Colman, M.C.; 27th Bn. Mining-engineer student; of Albert Park, S. Aust.; b. Woodville, S. Aust., 10 Apr. 1897.

²⁷ See pp. 298-9.

That night Colman took out his platoon except for three or four whom he replaced by volunteers—the party being 27 strong. While they lay cramped in the assembly trench from 3 to 10 o'clock, he visited the left company, whose commander, Lieut. Lampard, cheered him by saying he believed the German front line to be unoccupied by day. Lampard promised, if the raiders penetrated to opposite his sector, to "help to the last ounce."



Just before 10 a.m. a single rifle-shot ringing out in the assembly trench seemed likely to rouse the enemy—one of the party unable to stand the strain had shot himself in the foot.

At 10 the party crept on through the crop and Colman, with Sergt. Carter²⁸ and L.-Corpl. Boughen²⁹ for bayonet men and a couple of others, rushed the post that had faced him in his reconnaissance. It was empty. Immediately ahead now lay the orchard, and, after bringing the rest of the party up to the post, Colman, again with four or five men, crept forward behind the trees. At fifty yards this shelter ceased, and they found themselves looking, across the Marcelcave track, at a brick-pit the size of a field, in whose steep sides many shelters had been cut. Near its far end, a hundred yards away, were openings on the top of its northern and southern banks where the German front trench ran into them. No one stirred there; the small party, though now quite unsheltered, reached the northern opening without interruption, and the rest of the platoon was again called up.

Colman left his Lewis gunner, Pte. Crocker,³⁰ at the trench entrance to watch the opening in the southern bank and then

²⁸ Sgt. R. J. Carter (No. 4684; 27th Bn.). Engineer; of Marion, S. Aust.; b. O'Halloran Hill, S. Aust., 8 Jan. 1898.

²⁹ Sgt. F. R. Boughen, M.M. (No. 2372; 27th Bn.). Blacksmith; of Mundoora, S. Aust.; b. Mundoora, 12 Apr. 1891.

³⁰ Cpl. C. Crocker (No. 6056; 27th Bn.). Orchardist; of Ramco, River Murray, S. Aust.; b. Adelaide, 16 May 1891.

moved north-eastwards along the German front line, dropping a man every thirty yards or so. There were scraps of food in the trench, empty cartridges, and good shelters, but no Germans. After going some 600 yards, when only six men were left, Colman looked over the parapet to his left front and saw the flanking party moving down its trench, which cut his diagonally and went on to the German rear. To block the continuation of this trench, Colman and his two bayonet men at once crept across to it. When thirty yards away they saw a heavy machine-gun mounted, pointing along it. They rushed this and found the trench at once alive with Germans "trying to grab rifles and pull on their equipment." The three men threw in each his two bombs and then others from their pockets. The flanking party was running up as were some of the men who had been left in the other trench; 8 Germans had been killed and 13 surrendered. Colman scribbled a message to Lampard (whose men he could see waving at him in the Australian line 500 yards back):

Established block. Think you could get up overland if you come quickly.

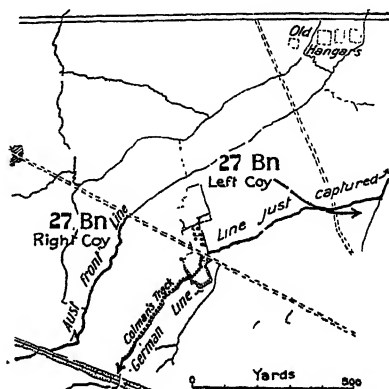
He saw Lampard run out to meet the runner and seize the message, and within half a minute the left company was streaming overland to the new front. It was then 10.40.

Returning to the orchard Colman found Capt. Hosking,⁸¹ commander of the 27th's southern front-line company, there with a telephone to battalion headquarters. Wisdom's orders were that, if penetration proved as easy as it looked, the 27th's patrols should filter as far as possible down the opposing trenches, getting the 28th, south of the railway line, to help there if necessary. Col. Chalmers asked Colman if he would now tackle the trench on the southern side of the brickfield. Colman said he would, and at 12.18, with the same two bayonet men but covered now by two Lewis gunners, he entered it, the rest of the platoon following. Some distance down it the three leaders found asleep two Germans, whom they sent quietly back, and, farther on, two more. One of these called out in German, and, with their bayonets at his throat, continued to shout, apparently warning his friends ahead.

⁸¹ Lt.-Col. W. S. Hosking, D.S.O., M.C.; 27th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Adelaide; b. Parkside, S. Aust., 7 Sep. 1889.

The damage was done (writes Colman). He was too good a soldier to murder—we let him live.

Looking out from the trench Colman saw four or five Germans running away along it carrying a machine-gun. He raced after them in the open, firing, but they reached the railway cutting and disappeared. Shouting to each other, so as not to be mistaken for Germans, he and the rest of his party joined up. A light machine-gun and a *granatenwerfer* were captured there. Capt. Hosking's company came round and occupied the trench. The German support trench, 100 yards farther east, was captured without opposition.



The right flank, which was open to Germans holding the continuation of the same trench-line south of the railway, was guarded by placing a post beside the railway cutting, in the former No-Man's Land. At 7.45 that evening a party of Germans tried to re-enter their old front line but were driven off, two being killed and five (with a machine-gun) captured.

German accounts show that the trench first seized by Colman was held by 16 men of the III/265th R.I.R. (108th Divn.), under a company sergeant-major. The position was one with which the Germans only had communication by night. "The Australians," says the history of the 265th, "must have skilfully crept up by using an old trench, so that even the neighbouring N.C.O.'s post observed nothing, notwithstanding the midday light. An officer's patrol sent out under Lt. David finds the trench previously occupied by the picket now held by a hostile garrison, and is beaten off by machine-gun fire and bombs."

South of the Marcellave track the front had been held by part of the 97th I.R. The history of that regiment says that its weakened companies could no longer hold their allotted front against the vigorous attacks made during these days. The two regiments were ordered to retake the lost sector on the evening of July 9.

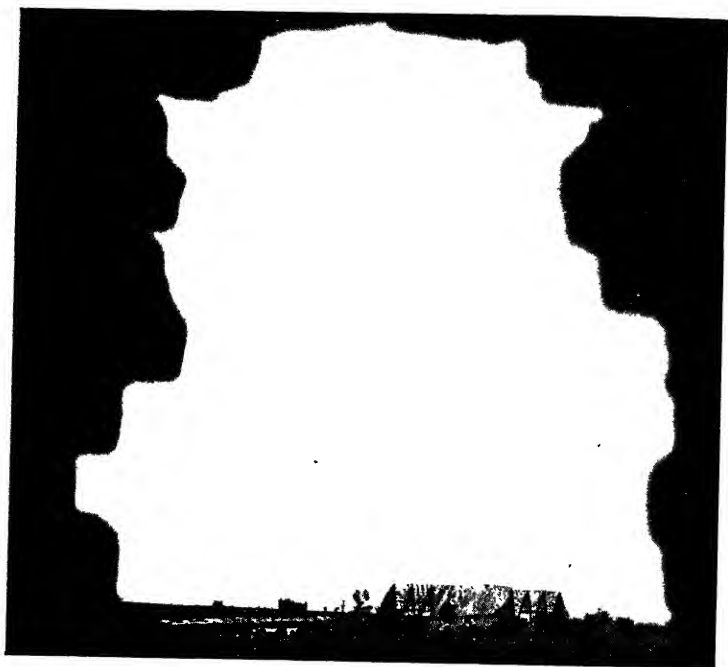
Meanwhile, however, Brig.-Genl. Wisdom had arranged with Col. Currie of the 28th Battalion (Western Australia) south of



18. THE CLAY-PIT EAST OF VILLERS-BRETONNEUX

Captured by the 27th Battalion by "peaceful penetration" on 8th July, 1918.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No E2686.
Taken on July 11th.*



19. THE HANGARS EAST OF VILLERS-BRETONNEUX

These lay on an old British aerodrome south of the Roman road, and were the scene of many raids and much "peaceful penetration", the ground on which they stood being gradually captured by this means. The photograph was taken from the eastern outskirts of Villers-Bretonneux on June 21st (on which day a raid took place).

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No E2663.



20. THE CROPS AT MONT DE MERRIS

Photographed on 17th June, 1918 from the parapet of an Australian post. (Note the field-gun, which had been captured by the 11th Battalion.)

Aust War Memorial Official Photo. No E4903.

To face p. 353.

the railway opposite Monument Farm and Wood, for a similar sortie there if leave for it could be obtained. At 7 a.m. on the 9th Wisdom again came up to the front line at the railway, and there told Currie that the required permission had been granted. Currie hastened to his headquarters and saw his scout officer, Lieut. Coburn,³² who said he was sure the German line south of the railway could be taken. A party from the railway cutting would make the entry at the northern side of the farm grounds a little east of the Villers-Bretonneux-Démuin road, which, leaving the town by the railway bridge, bisected the orchard, and ran past the monument and the farm ruins. The Official War Correspondent describes how a visitor from the army staff looked over the ground with Currie later that morning. "I suppose you'll be having a battle there before long," he said. "This afternoon," was the answer. "What do you think we are putting in?"

The visitor shook his head. "A job for a brigade, wouldn't it be?" suggested Currie.

"Well, I dare say it would. What are you tackling it with?"

"An officer and eleven men are going for the right half and an officer and six men for the left."

The visitor whistled. "What have you got on the left flank?"

"An N.C.O. and four men are going out to look after that."

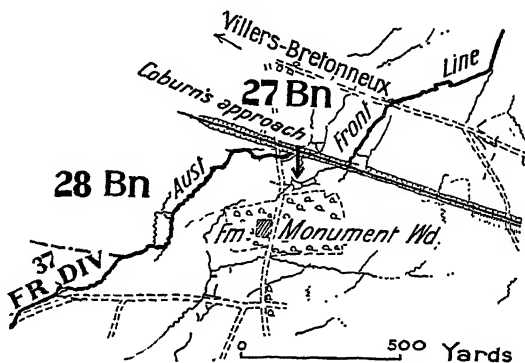
"It's the damndest bit of cheek I ever heard of," said the visitor laughing, "and I'm not going to swear it won't come off."

At 2.35 p.m., clouds now coming up and rain threatening, the Newton mortars fired—as they frequently did—a few of their formidable shells into Monument Farm. Their present object was to cause any Germans there to lie low, while Coburn at the head of some forty men—attackers and moppers-up—crawled southwards from the railway along a listeners' sap through the crop to the point where it had been mown down by the Germans in front of their line. Coburn knew that he was heading for a German post, its position being marked by an old limber³³ that lay there in the German wire. Through the

³² Lt. A. P. Coburn, M.C.; 28th Bn. Engine-driver; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 8 July 1888.

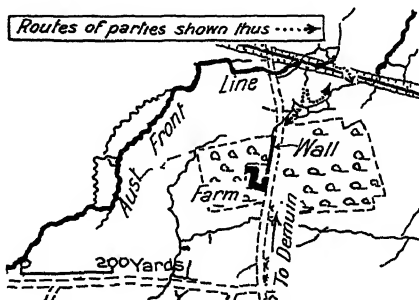
³³ Probably one belonging to the German battery overrun there in the night attack on April 24-25 by Capt. Harburn's company of the 51st; see *Vol. V*, p. 594.

last blades of the crop the leading Australians could see the German sentry in his heavy helmet looking out quietly from his trench, turning his head idly now to the left, now to the right, now gazing up at the clouds drifting over the sun. After waiting a minute for the Newtons to cease, Coburn rose and called, "Come on!" The party rushed the trench twenty yards away. One of the Western Australians afterwards told how



the German sentry gazed at the oncomers in astonishment, and then, with his mate beside him, dashed away along the trench. The Australians found it empty: a machine-gun lay in a niche wrapped in its cover. The sentry and his mate could still be seen along the trench, running fast in the direction of the farm.

Eleven of Coburn's scouts had been chosen to form the party for seizing the trenches to the right of the point of entry. A few of these now went by a German communication trench to the support line, which they then scoured while their mates under Coburn were moving down the front trench. A separate party of six men under Lieut. Loveday³⁴ moved up the German front line towards



³⁴ Lt. A. C. Loveday, 28th Bn. Clerk; of Fremantle, W. Aust.; b. Fremantle, 8 Jan. 1895. Died of wounds, 12 Aug. 1918.

the left, to meet an N.C.O. and four men who would enter the same trench at the railway cutting and work south-westwards. This latter party, as it approached its point of entry, caught sight of a German sentry above the cutting, who clearly also saw the Australians. But then looking round he caught sight of Loveday's party coming up the trench behind him, and fled through the cornfields in rear, running like a schoolboy in a race. The left sector was cleared without fighting. Mopping-up parties, each of nine men, were following both Coburn and Loveday; and precisely fifteen minutes from the start the men of the left line-company of the 28th in the Australian front trench opposite the captured sector saw Coburn come out on to the Démuin road and give the expected signal for it to walk across No-Man's Land and occupy the German support trench between the Démuin road and the railway, which it did forthwith.

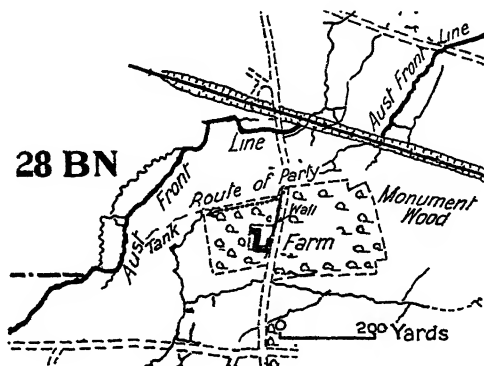
Meanwhile in the right sector the handful of Coburn's scouts in the German support trench to the right found this channel growing shallower and leading into the open. Far down in the orchard the two Germans were still running towards a hole in the long farmyard wall that bordered the far side of the road through the orchard—they were evidently making for some local headquarters at the farm. The scouts from the shallowing support trench ran across to Coburn's main party exploring the front trench.

In the neighbourhood of the farm wall this trench also petered out. But the hedge bounding the north side of the orchard continued westward and evidently its ditch had at some time been used as the front trench. Coburn's party ran along the open grassland behind it. As they approached the corner where it turned at right angles southward, a shower of stick-bombs fell among them and burst, killing one man. A shot rang out and another man was wounded.³⁵ The rest of the small party flung themselves down, mostly in the open, for there were no shell-holes, and bowled bombs at the Germans who were in a trench. But the German stick-bombs could be thrown farther than the Mills. The Australians had

³⁵ According to the Official War Correspondent's account, while the Australians were moving towards this corner a party of Germans had been seen moving through the orchard to strengthen this post.

managed to shoot a couple of their opponents when there came up, panting, a last member of the party. He was a rifle-grenadier, and, at the first explosion of one of his grenades behind them, the Germans ran.

Their trench was that which rounded the western side of the orchard and into this the Australians now followed them, but, though running fast, could not catch them. On reaching a point,

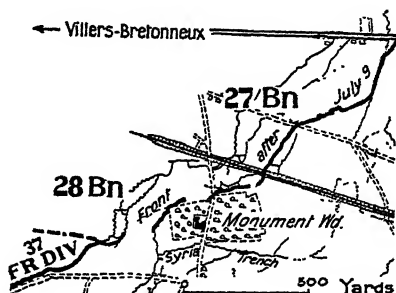


several hundred yards down the trench, where a British tank lay derelict on the parapet, Coburn tied a piece of a blue and white signal flag to the tank—the sign for the second company of the 28th to walk over and occupy the old German front line, which it did at once with rifles slung and many of the troops smoking. It was then twenty-four minutes from the start of the attack.

The right party went fifty yards farther, the last of the running Germans being, for a while, still in sight ahead of them and others now visible far off in the orchard, running away from the farm—in all the Western Australians estimated that they saw 90 of the garrison running from different parts of the position. A Stokes mortar of the 7th Light Trench Mortar Battery, which had been standing ready to shell any machine-guns that might oppose the advance, was not called upon for that purpose, and instead flung fifteen shells after the running men. Beyond the tank a double barricade was put in. Patrols went out into the "wood," and numbers of private prospectors found their way to the farm in search of souvenirs. As far as the farm wayfarers were screened by its ruins. Beyond it the patrols were shot at from "Syria Trench"—the old work originally dug by the 9th Brigade around the south and east

of the orchard after the 36th Battalion's counter-attack in the first battle of Villers-Bretonneux (4th April 1918). The farm cellars were found intact with chairs, beds, some old British staff papers, a piano, and two deep dugouts below; but the Germans had taken away their own papers and telephone.

This position which two months before, when bristling with machine-guns, had been taken and lost by the Western Australians of the 48th Battalion at so heavy a cost—their bodies still lay thickly before the trenches—had passed to their sister battalion within half an hour at a cost of one man killed and two wounded; ten Germans were killed and three machine-guns and two trench-mortars captured. The Official Australian War Correspondent telegraphed that this result was not due to absence of a German garrison adequate to resist the Western Australians, but to the fact that the German infantry had



bolted at their mere approach. The Germans jumped out and scurried to the rear hatless, coatless, weaponless. For a time yesterday the Australians were walking over the country where the German front trenches were exactly as they might stroll about the meadows in rest. . . . Australians have never witnessed such a scene as yesterday before Villers-Bretonneux.

It was decided to probe the "wood" and see whether Syria Trench could not be occupied also; but the patrols were sharply fired on from it,³⁶ and as the division's orders were not to "buy into a fight"—Col. Currie told his patrols, "Your motto will be 'boldness with caution'"—the advance for the moment ended.

Rather surprisingly, the immediate answer of the Germans had been delivered north of the railway; a white flare went up there, and from 4.30 p.m. the German artillery threw shells of all kinds on to the Australian slope of the crest. This fire

³⁶ The patrols found in the orchard a derelict tank "either French or a whippet." Some time later it was recognised as German (See p. 366).

afterwards extended to the ground captured south of the railway. There at about midnight the men of the 28th in the newly captured trench west of Monument Farm saw what they assumed to be a German working party lining up to the south of them. A Lewis gun was turned on and the figures disappeared. About the same time, nearer to the other flank where the trench petered out near the Démuin road, a passing Australian told Sergt. Freddy³⁷ of the 28th that Germans were in the Australian line—he had seen one of the 28th's posts falling back. Freddy brought up two of his men and the three crawled cautiously to a point from which they could see the road and the farm wall. No answer was returned to their calls, but two Germans were coming towards them from the hole in the wall as if to cut them off. The party threw three bombs and then barricaded the trench so as to stop any further penetration. It was found that the Germans had bombed a post of the 28th, wounding all its occupants, and this post and another had withdrawn. But by the morning the Germans were gone. North of the railway also a large party of Germans tried to approach the new post of the 27th at the Marcelcave track, but was fired on and dispersed.

Reports of the three incidents just related reached divisional headquarters interspersed among other messages telling of peaceful penetration in the area near the Roman road, and it was not realised at the time that any concerted German counter-attack had been delivered. But during the afternoon of the 10th there was seen lying out between the orchard and the south-western end of the captured trench a young German, evidently one of the supposed working party that had been fired on during the night. On being brought in by the Western Australians he gave the information that this party also had been assembling to counter-attack.

Actually the German command had arranged for a combined and fairly extensive counter-thrust. The histories of the two southern regiments of the 108th Divn. (265th R.I.R. and 97th I.R.) show that as soon as each of their sectors was broken into, on July 8 and 9 respectively, the commander of the divisional infantry, which was about to be relieved by that of another division, insisted that the lost ground

³⁷ Sgt. G. Freddy (No. 2382; 28th Bn.). Sawmill hand; of North Dandalup, W. Aust.; b. Port Adelaide, 14 Feb. 1876.

must immediately be recaptured. North of the railway the attempt was to be made on the evening of the 9th by two companies of the I Bn., 265th, supported by one of the III.³⁸ At 7 p.m. that day the commanders of the 1st and 2nd companies, Lts. Smidt and Grünewälder, summoned to conference at regimental headquarters, found "a whole council of war assembled there including even officers of the brigade." The regimental commander greeted them with the words, "These are the officers who will ensure a good departure³⁹ for the regiment." Nevertheless, although Smidt, who knew the ground, and was supported by Rechtern, urged that the objective trenches were wrongly marked on the map and should be attacked from the south to avoid flanking fire, the staff overruled him. Shortly after 10 p.m. the companies were ready to attack the trench north of the railway, one from the flank, the other frontally. The "annihilating bombardment" was to fall at 10.20, but Smidt "waited for it," he says, "alas, in vain. Not a shot fell." He ordered the advance, his only direction being by the light of his opponents' flares. As he advanced he "counted not ten shots of our artillery. Then it ceased again. . . . On approaching the picket trench (the old German support trench) we were seen by the enemy sentries there who quickly withdrew to the main trench. Advancing at the double the 2nd company then occupied this bit of trench. Hardly had we set foot in it when suddenly strong machine-gun fire, especially from the right flank, accompanied by artillery and trench-mortar fire, set in, evidence that the enemy had expected us. The 1st company suffered particularly by this fire, for it had meanwhile advanced against the main line of resistance. . . . On account of the fire it could get no further and therefore remained lying in contact with the 2nd company about 100 yards short of the main line of resistance." Smidt's vital duty was to ensure that the attacking companies were not encircled from their northern flank, but he presently learned that the 97th I.R., which was to have advanced on their southern flank, had not done so, and that this flank also was open. Fearing that in the morning the two companies would be "checkmated," just as the company sergeant-major's picket had been on the day before, he reported the position to Rechtern. He was ordered to hold the picket trench and hand it over to the relieving company. The 1st Company had lost 15 men, Smidt's (2nd) company none.

The co-operation of the 97th I.R. must have been greatly hampered by the events of July 9 on its own front at Monument Wood. Its history says that, after the harassing days of early July, there followed on July 9 "an extremely strong attack"—this being, of course, the silent raid of Lts. Coburn and Loveday with their 40 men—"against the outpost-line and rolled it up." Possibly part of Syria Trench also was abandoned but reoccupied before the Australians could know of it, for the same history says that "a determined counter-attack under Lt. Linn retook nearly the whole of the captured line." The real counter-attack south of the railway was made by the III Bn. during the night, "as the higher command insisted that the whole forward zone must be recaptured." This battalion, which is said to have been barely 300

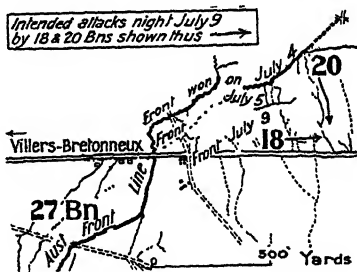
³⁸ Under the direction of the forward battalion commander, Capt. Rechtern—strangely enough the same officer who had led the counter-attack above Sailly-Laurette on June 11 against the 27th Aust. Bn. (See pp. 236-9).

³⁹ That is to say, an honourable relief.

strong, temporarily retook the two posts at the Démuin road.⁴⁰ At this stage XI Corps Headquarters ordered the abandonment of all attempts to regain the old line. The "picket trench" north of the railway was apparently not retained by the 108th Divn., and the situation was "still obscure" when the division was relieved.

For the next three days, the resistance of German posts about Monument Wood having temporarily stiffened, the chief field of peaceful penetration was in front of the 5th (N. S. Wales) Brigade, farther north astride of the Roman road where, after relieving the 6th Brigade⁴¹ on the night of the 6th, the New South Welsh battalions had incessantly continued the probing begun by their predecessors. Although its course was intricate this fighting affords a most interesting illustration of peaceful penetration in its most difficult phase.

On the night of July 7 both the front-line battalions, 20th and 18th, dug a new line of posts 200 yards ahead; those of the 18th Bn., north of the Roman road, were to be completed on the night of the 8th; but the peaceful penetration by the 27th Bn. during that day necessitated still farther advance, which was made by the 18th pushing a party down one of the old communication trenches on its left, and other parties digging a diagonal line of posts across the crop-land to the Roman road, an advance of 500 yards from the objectives of the Hamel attack. On the night of the 9th the left battalion (20th) was to thrust down a parallel but longer "communication trench" a quarter of a mile farther east, the 18th helping it by pushing forward to enter the same trench near the Roman road. Several sections of old trenches intervened, and Lt. Clayton⁴² of the 18th, moving out with his platoon diagonally from the Roman road, and joining another platoon of the 18th under Lt. Jones⁴³ several hundred yards north of it,



⁴⁰ The incident, however, is barely recognisable in the vastly exaggerated account given in the history of the 97th I.R. (p. 76), which says that the battalion "succeeded in recapturing nearly the whole of the old outpost-line and holding it. As the enemy nevertheless continuously received reinforcements, the little band had to withdraw about 250 metres on the morning of July 10."

⁴¹ It had also taken over part of the front occupied by the 7th Bde. during the Battle of Hamel.

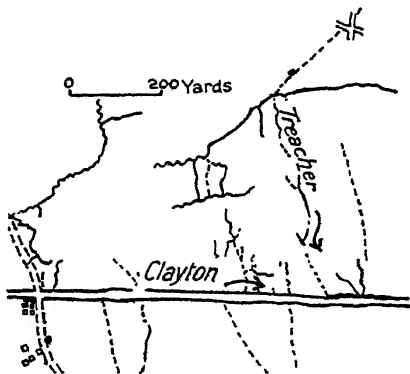
⁴² Lt. G. J. G. Clayton, M.C.; 18th Bn. Station overseer; of Harden, N.S.W.; b. Demondrille, N.S.W., 1893. Killed in action, 30 July 1918.

⁴³ Lt. W. F. Jones, M.C.; 18th Bn. Master painter; of Sydney; b. London, 21 Jan. 1888.

crawled close up to a German post north of the road and then bombarded it with rifle-grenades while Jones's platoon lay out in the crop to the left covering his attack. Each platoon had two Lewis guns (which was now the regular provision) and about twenty men, and under the bombardment and the fire of these guns the garrison of the German post, whose orders doubtless were to fall back if seriously attacked, could be seen and heard leaving their trench which Clayton then occupied.

Flares now shot up from another German trench not far beyond. It was therefore bombarded in the same manner. The enemy's artillery gave no answer to the flares of the German infantry, and after three minutes the latter again with shouts ran back, this time to the southern side of the Roman road. Clayton again advanced and occupied their trench, and ordered up Jones's party. As it came it was heavily fired on by German machine-guns in a third trench, a little beyond Clayton, and some men were killed.

Clayton believed that he was in his objective—the "communication trench" down which the 20th were advancing; but the 20th's party, after thrusting about 300 yards, came to a point where for a considerable distance no trench existed and were stopped by a German post in the continuation of the same trench beyond. On the following night (July 10-11) Capt. Broadbent's⁴⁴ company of the 20th endeavoured to continue the thrust. The German post which had held it up was first located by a small patrol led out at 11 p.m. by Lt. Balmahno.⁴⁵ A strong patrol, three officers and thirty-five men in all, led by Lt. Treacher, next crept southward at 2 a.m., intending to bomb and rush the position. The patrol was organised in seven parties, bombing parties in centre, Lewis guns on flanks.



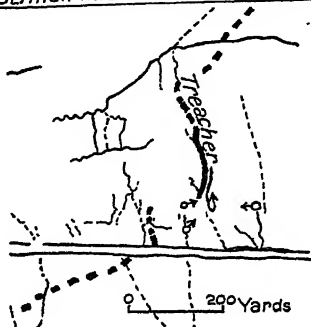
In these enterprises success and the lives of the attackers depended on the nerves and self-control of every man, and unfortunately through the tension or through mistake after going fifty yards, when still too far from the enemy, one of the leading men threw his first bomb; the others then threw theirs and the volley exploded uselessly forty yards short of the enemy. The burst aroused the Germans, at least four of whose machine-guns swept the ground, one firing from close on the party's right rear, where the Germans had evidently established a new post unseen by the Australians though actually between those of the 20th and 18th Bns. The rearmost parties had not yet left their own trench, but, of the men with Treacher, eight were quickly killed

⁴⁴ Capt. J. A. Broadbent, M.C.; 20th Bn. Bank clerk; of Greenwich, N.S.W.; b. Redfern, N.S.W., 6 Oct. 1890.

⁴⁵ Lt. L. C. Balmahno, 20th Bn. Seaman; of Sydney; b. Devonshire, Eng., 1892.

or wounded, and he gave the word to "get back."⁴⁶ The party succeeded in bringing back only two wounded men—the rest lay out and, as the hurricane of "whizz-bang" shells, and trench-mortar bombs, and the wild firing of flares began to die down, their constant calls for stretcher-bearers were irresistible. As day began to break some of the company stretcher-bearers climbed out, carrying a white flag. On seeing them the Germans fired a white rocket and all shooting immediately ceased. Four pairs of bearers collected the bodies of the dead and wounded. While they did so the trenches of both sides became lined with men standing or sitting on the parapets. Four Germans presently came forward from the post that had been attacked, and Lts. Treacher, who had been slightly wounded by a bomb-handle, and Holmes⁴⁷ and two men went out to meet them, and stood talking with the Germans, two of whom were N.C.O's, until the collection was finished, when the Germans saluted and both parties withdrew. A Lewis gun was fired into the air, the crowds on each side disappeared, and firing was resumed.

German M.G. Posts shown thus. →



The Australian officers had noted the position of the German posts in the neighbourhood, and advised that the trench attacked was too strongly held to be assaulted except under a barrage. The German N.C.O's had wisely rolled up their shoulder straps, and their unit could not be ascertained, but the posts discovered were sprayed with machine-gun fire on the following night.

There was good reason for the German N.C.O's caution—the post attacked was held, not by the troops (108th Divn.) who on the previous day had faced the 20th, but by part of the III/152nd I.R., belonging to the 41st Divn. This had been serving near Hébuterne and, after about a month's rest, had that night taken over part of this front.⁴⁸ The informal armistice drew an order from regimental headquarters to the effect that, "owing to a peculiar case," their opponent must not be allowed to recover his dead or wounded or bury his dead close in front of the German front line under cover of the Red Cross flag. "We require the enemy's dead and wounded," said the order, but added that if they were near the opposing line their recovery was permissible. A similar order would possibly have been drawn from Australian headquarters had any reports of the armistice reached it, but, by orders from intermediate headquarters, they did not.

During the armistice the 20th could see a row of Australian heads not in the long trench which Clayton thought he had reached, but 180

⁴⁶ The use of the order "retire" was generally forbidden owing to the possibility of its being given by the enemy.

⁴⁷ Lt. G. S. B. Holmes, 20th Bn. Draughtsman; of Parramatta, N.S.W.; b. Fortitude Valley, Q'land, 23 Oct. 1892.

⁴⁸ The post to Treacher's right rear was possibly that held by Lt. Bartels, who was specially rewarded by the local command for beating off an attack by firing his machine-gun alternately to front and rear of his trench.

yards west of it, in one of several shorter parallel trenches. The 17th Bn. which had meanwhile relieved the 18th, was ordered to oust the intruding post that had caused most of Treacher's losses, but a patrol sent out on the following night after a bombardment by Stokes mortars, found that they had already gone. A post which had been thrust out by the 18th south of the main road,⁴⁹ somewhat short of the supposed position of Clayton's flank, was withdrawn, the German front line being actually behind it. Here the posts of the 18th had also been advanced east of the old aerodrome, and those of the 27th had pushed forward into alignment.⁵⁰ Their inner flanks lay near some old buildings of the aerodrome—one of the few landmarks that stood out from the long grass and crops. In that area it was exceedingly difficult even for those on the spot to determine precisely what points had been reached.

The resistance to the 5th Brigade also had now stiffened and, except for a successful raid by Lieut. Tripp⁵¹ of the 20th, who with three men crept out and rushed a German post on the night of the 12th, activity ceased for the moment in that region, only, however, to break out again on the front of the 7th Brigade at the Monument.

It was on July 11th, during this short lull in peaceful penetration, that there took place at Australian Corps Headquarters a conference with the army commander to discuss the plan for the full-dress attack on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau, now sanctioned by Haig. Monash and Rosenthal with their chief staff officers and artillery commanders, and those of the tank and air force brigades of Fourth Army, assembled at Bertangles Château, and Monash explained his plan.

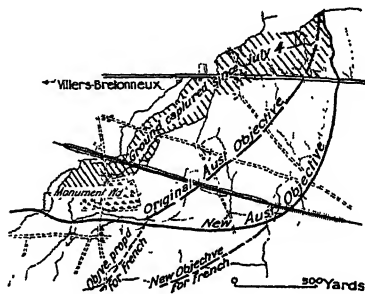
However, he added, the Australian infantry had already taken by peaceful penetration about a quarter of the objective, and had even gone beyond it on the northern flank, forming an awkward salient. The objective would have to be altered, and in view of the poor fighting quality of the German divisions it might be extended. The vital factor was how far the French would take part and the Australian line would be shortened—which was necessary owing to the Corps strength "having fallen considerably." Monash pointed out that the old French

⁴⁹ Capt. C. H. Kaepfel (North Sydney and Armidale, N.S.W.) of the 18th had reconnoitred a German trench here on the night of July 10 and found it empty.

⁵⁰ The 28th Bn. also sent a patrol along the edge of the railway to cover their right. After a bombing encounter it returned, as intended.

⁵¹ Lt. H. W. Tripp, 20th Bn. Storekeeper; of Sydney; b. Tuckenhay, Devonshire, Eng., 7 Mar. 1893.

defence line just short of Warfusée would be a good position to hold, but Rawlinson decided that, in view of the uncertainty of early co-operation by the French, the objective should not be extended so far. The alternative was adopted of placing it half a mile east of the line laid down in the original plan—an extension which Monash had already on the previous day authorised for attainment by peaceful penetration. Only two battalions would now attack, and the plans of their action, and as to the tanks, barrages, and smoke screens were outlined.⁵² The preparations were to be complete by July 17th, but the date of attack would depend on what action the French would undertake. Meanwhile Rawlinson would see Debeney, and the Australian infantry would continue its exploitation but avoid becoming involved in a general battle.



On the very day of this meeting peaceful penetration was set going again by the discovery by patrols at 11 a.m. that the Germans had, at least temporarily, abandoned their front line south-west of Monument Wood where the Australian line joined the French.⁵³ Patrols again found Monument Farm and most of the orchard empty,⁵⁴ as was the entrance of Syria Trench.

Nibbling again

The historian of the 2nd (Prussian) Grenadier Regiment, right flank unit of the 109th Divn. which held the German salient between Monument Farm and Hangard Wood, says that at this time "the activity of the enemy decidedly increased. In particular, it took the shape of strong attacks against the troops on our immediate right, and repeated thrusts of fairly strong detachments against the right flank of the Grenadier."

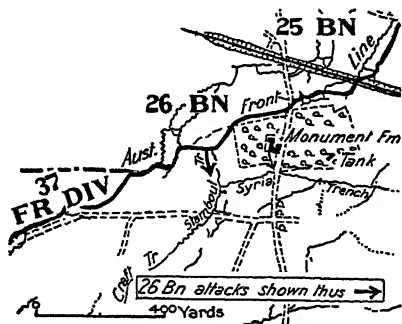
⁵² The rôle allotted to the tanks, Monash said, would be more extensive than at Hamel, since all ranks now felt more confidence in them. The objective would be enclosed in a box-barrage, with one smoke shell in every ten, and the tanks and infantry would "mop up" the area.

⁵³ It was known as "Stamboul Trench," and its southern extension as "Craft Trench."

⁵⁴ Thirteen boxes, which proved to be tank traps containing explosive, were found on the road north of Monument Farm.

On July 10th, despite the supposed success of the counter-attacks by the neighbouring 108th Divn. at Monument Wood, the 2nd Grenadier had to throw back its right flank.

The 26th (Queensland) Battalion came in, well rested, on the night of July 13th. As soon as the relief was complete, shortly after midnight, a party under Lieut. Gibson pushed 100 yards down "Stamboul Trench" and erected a barricade opposite the south-western corner of the orchard. At the same time patrols of the left company moving down the Démuin road to the southern edge of the wood met no Germans but could hear them working a quarter of a mile to the south. Obviously some retirement had taken place. During the morning the commander of the right company together with the battalion commander, Maj. Robinson, explored Stamboul Trench almost to its junction with Syria Trench, where they found a German post. For a mile to the south-east the plateau furnished no sign of German movement. Accordingly Robinson on his return arranged with his company commanders to assault Syria Trench. At 6 o'clock, covered by the fire of two Stokes mortars and some Lewis guns, Gibson's party attacked the German barricade in Stamboul Trench. The Germans fought hard, using stick-bombs with extra slabs of explosive wired on to them, but they were overpowered, five being killed, two captured, and others wounded. Meanwhile two other attacking parties, which had assembled in the orchard near the Farm enclosure, entered Syria Trench from the north. It was unoccupied where they jumped into it, but some Germans fled before them as they pushed westward to join Gibson. The trench junction was taken, and a block built beyond it⁵⁵ and also east of the Démuin road. During the night two feeble counter-attacks



⁵⁵ Cpl. O. H. Schafer (Childers, O'land; killed in action, 2 Sep. 1918) played a conspicuous part in building the block and in its subsequent defence.

were easily repulsed.⁵⁶ The left company of the 26th also had sent out patrols south of the railway, and after dark established posts in touch with those of the 25th north of the cutting. Monument Wood was thus taken, and in it the disabled German tank "Mephisto," the first to be captured by the British.⁵⁷

Curiously enough it was not until a week later that the Australian Corps realised, on information received from the staff of the 37th French Divn. adjoining its flank, that on the night of July 10 the Germans had voluntarily withdrawn their outpost-line from their deep salient in front of the French at Cachy, and fallen back on a line more than 1,000 yards in rear of the tip of the former salient. German histories confirm the statements of prisoners at this time, that this was due to the constant advances of the Australian troops on their northern flank, and the fear that the French would deliver just such an attack as Monash and Rawlinson were now endeavouring to arrange. By leaving patrols and sentries behind, the Germans hoped to deceive the French, but the withdrawal (says the history of the 26th R.I.R.) was discovered by the French in two days.

By peaceful penetration the Australian infantry had now secured practically the whole of the objective originally set for their corps in Monash's plan for an Anglo-French offensive on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau; only the extended objective authorised by Rawlinson at the conference on July 11th remained to be taken by them. Consequently by far the most urgent matter was now to induce the French to carry out the part assigned to them in the plan—to which they had never yet definitely agreed. On July 12th the First French Army had made its advance on the Avre, capturing Castel and the heights west of Moreuil and taking 500 prisoners; but General Debeney held to the view that decision as to participating in an advance south of Villers-Bretonneux must be left by him to the discretion of the XXXI Corps commander, General Toulorge. Rawlinson's urgings had thus far failed to induce action.

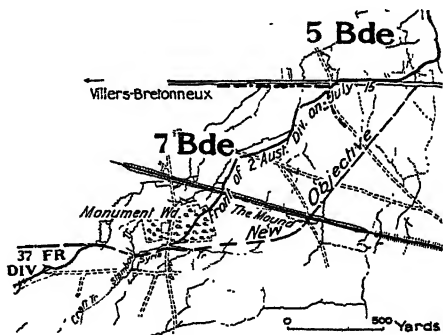
The commander of the 2nd Australian Division, Maj.-General Rosenthal, who on July 15th, as was his practice, went

⁵⁶ The two Stokes mortars, under Lt. A. H. Stewart, were brought up to Stamboul Trench from which they shelled Germans reported to be assembling at positions, suspected to be strong-points.

⁵⁷ See note on p. 357. It had been disabled on April 24 (see Vol. V, pp. 552, 632n). It was now salvaged on the night of July 22 by British tanks in conjunction with a working party of Queenslanders. See Vol. XII, plate 467.

the whole tour of the newly captured front, was impressed by the opportunity now offered for inducing the local French commanders to undertake a substantial advance.⁵⁸ He accordingly asked Monash that day for leave to arrange the matter with the subordinate French commanders, with whom he was on excellent terms. The officers and men of the French colonial units (37th Division) next to the Australian flank had watched the excursions of the Diggers with frank admiration. "French officers," says an Australian machine-gunner who was stationed there,⁵⁹ "told me they had never seen such daring daylight tactics, and thought they evidenced high class infantry." The French colonials themselves were capable of audacious raiding in daylight: at noon on July 2nd, according to a German account,⁶⁰ a French patrol had got through part of Hangard Wood and "lifted" three Germans, who were resting in the gully behind it, without the neighbouring posts seeing anything of the occurrence.⁶¹

Rosenthal during his tour also was struck by the excellence of the new Australian front except at one point. Close ahead beside the railway cutting could be seen a long, scrub-covered hummock of spoil—the same "Mound" which the 9th Brigade had reached in its counter-attack on April 4th. Rosenthal realised that this must be occupied, but the task would require only a continuance of the advance for 1,000 yards astride of the railway.



At 5 o'clock that evening (July 15th) Rawlinson with the chief of his general staff, Maj.-General Montgomery, met Mon-

⁵⁸ They were already having a communication trench dug across the old No-Man's Land.

⁵⁹ Cpl. F. L. Fitzpatrick, 6th M.G. Coy. See *In Good Company*, by W. A. -C. Carne, p. 315.

⁶⁰ *History of the 26th R.I.R. (109th Div.)*, p. 334.

⁶¹ They did hear suspicious sounds and vainly opened fire.

ash and Rosenthal at the latter's headquarters at Glisy. Monash explained the position of the Mound, and defined the line enclosing it which he now wished to attain—an objective slightly more extensive than the original one, but much less than that authorised on July 11th. "No doubt," he said, "within a week we can get the whole by penetration without set attack"; but owing to the uncertainty of French co-operation Rawlinson ordered that the front must not be advanced farther than the line of the Mound for the time being. And, as he considered it "hopeless to induce the French Army command expressly to order these operations and arrangements,"⁶² he empowered Rosenthal to ask the French regimental and divisional commanders to undertake, with the help of the Australians, penetration southwards along Stamboul-Craft Trench, which, when taken, would be held by the French.

The advance to the Mound was to be made by peaceful penetration, and the attempt began the same night (July 15th-16th). A party of the 25th Battalion moved out through the crop-land by the Marcelcave track to enter and capture, if possible, an old semi-circular British trench dug after April 4th 600 yards north of the Mound. The 25th first established a less advanced post along the road and succeeded in entering the old trench; but, while digging in, the party was attacked from the south by some forty Germans with bombs. More than half its members including one officer (Lieut. Rerden⁶³) were killed or wounded, and it was driven out.

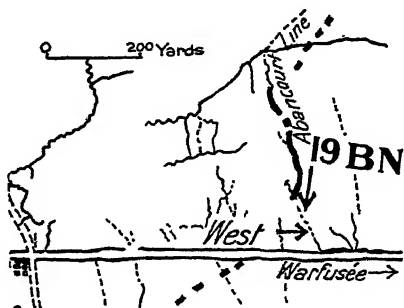
On the same night the 5th Brigade was to advance the line of posts between the left of the 25th Battalion and the Roman road, at the same time seizing north of the road the "communication trench" in which the 20th Battalion's party had been stopped on the night of July 11th. This time the 19th Battalion was to bomb down the trench while the 17th from the front attacked a German strong-point in a parallel trench 100 yards west of it on the Roman road. Two platoons of the 17th duly rushed the strong-point, the Germans running as they approached and leaving two men dead. At dawn Lieut. West with four men went forward and jumped into the next trench

⁶² The quotation is from a signed draft of the decisions.

⁶³ Lt. P. H. Rerden, 25th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Middle Brighton, Vic.; b. Carlton, Vic., 15 Aug. 1892.

—the same down which the 19th was to bomb. The 19th, however, was not yet near, and West and his men were faced by a number of Germans who killed or wounded the whole party except one. The Germans here, despite the recent warning order from their regimental headquarters, showed themselves most friendly to the Australian stretcher-bearers, pointing out to them where the wounded lay, and allowing them to bring in Lieut. West, who was mortally wounded and unconscious, in exchange for a wounded German.

On the following night (July 16th-17th) the 19th Battalion completed its task. As so often happened, the explanation of earlier difficulties was found in the fact that part of the long communication trench was less continuous than appeared on the maps,⁶⁴ consisting of little more than a series of rifle-pits. At 2 a.m. on July 17th parties of the 19th Battalion, led by Lieuts. Sell and Hayes,⁶⁵ worked round to front and rear of it. The Germans, seeing themselves in danger of being surrounded, ran back leaving a number of dead. Three were captured:



This thrust, although the attacking parties were unaware of it until afterwards, broke into the preparations for a German counter-attack. Prisoners captured near the Roman road on July 12-13 and since had belonged to the 41st Divn., which, as already stated, had come in on July 10—just when the line of its predecessor (108th) was being overrun by Australians. The historian of its centre regiment, the 18th I.R., says that its position suffered in being "absolutely devoid of cover. The troops are merely put into shell-craters or newly dug holes in the earth in the midst of the wheat-fields. The Australians reared in the bush are able with ease to creep up and capture single posts."

The northern regiment, astride the Roman road, was the 152nd I.R., and its history claims that on the night of July 15 the Australian attack was beaten off; but the fact that the regiment was ordered to counter-attack next day, in conjunction with the 18th I.R. on its left, is evidence that the divisional commander concluded that part of the forward zone

⁶⁴ The continuous trench that appeared on air-photographs was apparently only a foot deep; the real position was a line of rifle-pits immediately west of it.

⁶⁵ Lt. M. Hayes, M.C.; 19th Bn. Miner; of Tingha, N.S.W.; b. Tomingley, N.S.W., 12 July 1893.

had been lost, and was worth retaking. The enterprise was known as "Buzzard". In the evening Lt. Harmjanz reported that the Australian trenches were strongly garrisoned, and an attack must be expected. The order for the counter-attack, however, still stood, and the 152nd was preparing to deliver it with a composite party from all battalions when the 19th Bn.'s attack caused the pickets to fall back on to the main line of resistance. The light machine-guns for the "Buzzard" attack were abandoned and a heavy machine-gun was barely saved.

The 17th Battalion this night adjusted its posts south of the road, endeavouring to make sure that it occupied the line set for it. But the patrols of the 7th Brigade in the railway sector had been unable to gain ground, and the fact that the Germans were now, for the first time in months, zealously digging and wiring a definite line of defence behind their advanced posts, evidently with a view to falling back on it and putting an end to peaceful penetration, convinced Generals Monash and Rosenthal that the best way of advancing the line to the Mound was by formal assault. Accordingly at very short notice it was arranged that the two line-battalions of the 7th Brigade—both Queensland units—should attack at 9.45 on the night of July 17th, the 25th north of the railway and the 26th south of it (where the Mound lay). The barrage would be provided by the artillery normally supporting the division; its own two brigades had just come round from the left flank of the corps to rejoin it, and, with two British "army" brigades, carried out this task.⁶⁶

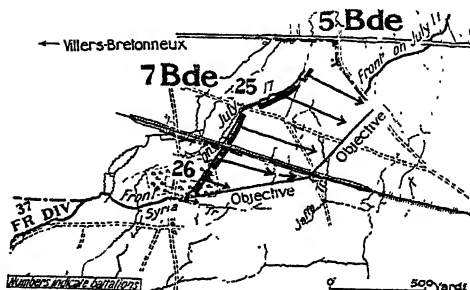
The barrage was well laid but thin.⁶⁷ The three attack companies of the 25th Battalion, advancing through the wheat on a front of 1,000 yards north of the railway, quickly took the old semi-circular trench where patrols had failed two nights before; but when advancing beyond they found that the German posts, scattered in the crop and firing through the shell-bursts, had to be captured in each case by manoeuvring. This the platoons duly did, though necessarily losing the barrage in

⁶⁶ The attack followed a rearrangement by which the divisional artilleries of the corps rejoined their own divisions. The fact that artillery of a division stayed in a sector much longer than infantry, and that after rest the infantry could seldom be returned to their old sector, made it impossible to keep the field artillery for long with their own divisions. They were now largely supplemented by "army" brigades. The 2nd Divisional Artillery, forming the Right Group, fired south of the railway, the 14th and 86th (Army) Bdes. north of it. The 23rd (Army) Bde., part of the left group, was resting.

⁶⁷ Probably the guns actually firing were not more than one to 30-35 yards of front.

the process.⁶⁸ Lieut. Ryan⁶⁹ was killed by a burst of machine-gun bullets.⁷⁰ The German posts, says Lieut.-Col. Davis's⁷¹ report, "in every case put up some show of fight. In two cases, as we approached, . . . the garrisons left the trench and came out to meet us, a hand-to-hand struggle ensuing." The German machine-gunners resisted to the end, but as a rule the riflemen, after exchanging a few shots, fell back on the next post, where the fight began again.

On the parapet of one post were found no less than five machine-guns. A party of Australian machine-gunners under Lieut. Loone,⁷² taking forward its two guns with the attack, found Germans still in the objective trench, and, though having itself suffered heavy casualties in the barrage, captured several including an officer who was working his machine-gun.



With the barrage lost and few landmarks existing, it was most difficult to decide when the objective was reached. One young officer, after placing his platoon in the trench that he believed to be his objective, walked out with his batman through the crop to find touch on his flanks. Seeing a party at work he went towards it and, being challenged and replying in English, was received by a volley of shots and bombs which wounded both. As the platoon was heavily fired on and was evidently in advance of the line on its flanks, the officer withdrew it to the semi-circular trench. The southern company

⁶⁸ In the course of these tussles Lt. S. J. Smith put out of action with bombs two German machine-guns, and, among others, Sgts. C. Brooker and W. Greening, Cpl. H. O. Schinkel, and Ptes. G. Cargill and C. H. Marks were outstanding. (Smith belonged to Brisbane; Brooker to Toowoomba, Q'land; Greening to Auchterflower, Q'land; Schinkel to Cannon Hill, Q'land; Cargill to Red Hill, Q'land; Marks to Catherine Hill Bay, N.S.W.)

⁶⁹ Lt. H. J. Ryan, 25th Bn. Resident magistrate; of Port Moresby, Papua; b. Tipperary, Ireland, 31 Jan. 1878. Killed in action, 17 July 1918.

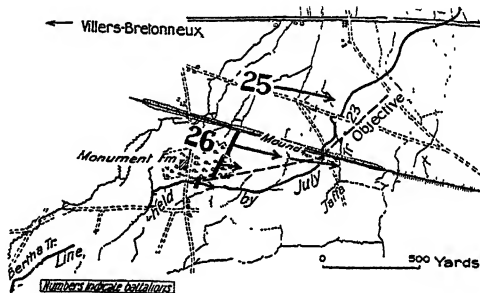
⁷⁰ Lt. C. A. Auchterlonie (Gympie, Q'land; killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918) took Ryan's place and led with notable success.

⁷¹ Lt.-Col. W. M. Davis, M.C. Commanded 25th Bn., 1918; 26th Bn., 1918-19. Fitter; of Brisbane; b. Wauchope, N.S.W., 18 Mar. 1888.

⁷² Lt. F. Loone, 22nd M.G. Coy. Tram conductor; of Sydney; b. Scottsdale, Tas., 1886.

had, by mistake, stopped in a western branch of the German support line ("Jaffa Trench"), which was its objective.⁷³ The posts established by the 5th Brigade on the previous nights, though not so far advanced as they were then believed to be, secured the left. As soon as the general line of the 7th Brigade was known the posts of the 5th also pushed out. At dusk on the 18th the line was surveyed and linked up.

South of the railway the 26th Battalion (Queensland and Tasmania) had no less than 500 yards to go from its starting line in the orchard to the first German trench, on which the barrage was consequently kept for the first six minutes. Here too the curtain of shells was noticeably thin, and when Capt. Murphy's company reached the western end of the Mound a German machine-gun there continued firing through the barrage at the advancing troops. It was seen by Lieut. Borella, leading his platoon in the first of the two waves. He ran ahead of his men into the barrage, shot the two gunners with his revolver, and captured the gun.⁷⁴ The attacking companies were shot at by



many other machine-guns, but fortunately their crews for the most part fired nervously.⁷⁵ The objective for the left company of the 26th was the road that bridged the railway and passed over the Mound near its eastern end. This road, however, was so cut up by shell-fire that Borella's party passed over it without seeing it and, pushing on in search of it, suddenly came on a trench full of Germans, who were obviously surprised. The Queenslanders showered bombs into it, and a Lewis gunner,

⁷³ The mistake, says Davis, was fortunate, as the company had then only two officers and twenty-two men and must have failed had it attempted to attack the eastern branch.

⁷⁴ For his leadership during the whole fight Borella was awarded the Victoria Cross.

⁷⁵ Capt. Murphy, however, was wounded, and Lt. R. McL. Smith killed, and there were casualties among the men (including those of the two machine-gun crews under Lt. A. J. Prichard). (Murphy belonged to Brisbane; Smith to West End, Brisbane; Prichard to Charters Towers, Q'land.)

firing from the hip, sprayed bullets into the Germans, who quickly disappeared into dugouts. A few bombs were rolled down the stairs and thirty Germans came out as prisoners.

The trench that Borella had seized was actually Jaffa Trench, 200 yards beyond his objective. No sooner had the prisoners been taken than the two dugouts there burst into flames—Borella assumed that they were fired by the Germans in order to burn papers and maps that might have been left there. The two platoons with him were now reduced to about twenty men, with several Lewis guns.⁷⁶ He could see and hear the 25th Battalion engaged in heavy fighting north of the railway, far behind him. The flames of the burning dugouts illuminated his few men and would have caused them to be easy targets. Accordingly he withdrew to shell-holes on the edge of the illumination. During the next hour German reinforcements continually came up, and, foolishly assembling against the light of the fires, offered well-silhouetted targets to Borella's men.

The southern company of the 26th had dropped a line of posts connecting this position with the old one south of the orchard—resistance was met only in Syria Trench,⁷⁷ where a few prisoners were taken. In that trench a strong-post which might have barred the right of the advance, had earlier been surrounded and taken by three parties from another company.⁷⁸ Notwithstanding the muddy ground, carrying was excellently performed—for the 25th by a company of the 27th, and for the 26th by a company of the 28th; all the shells for the two Stokes mortars that went forward under Lieut. W. L. Miller⁷⁹ duly reached the front, sixty for each gun. The four machine-guns, despite casualties in their crews,⁸⁰ got through with all ammunition. The new line was quickly consolidated. Lieut. Whittaker,⁸¹ and the signallers of the

⁷⁶ Sgt. L. J. Briggs (Longford, Tas.; died 18 Feb. 1932) and Pte. A. H. Homan (Fingal, Tas.) were conspicuous.

⁷⁷ Sgt. A. H. Armstrong (Manyung, Q'land) was conspicuous here.

⁷⁸ Of the garrison, 5 were killed and 5 captured; 2 machine-guns were taken.

⁷⁹ Lt. W. L. Miller, 25th Bn. and 7th L.T.M. Bty. Station manager; of "Murrungundy," Dubbo, N.S.W.; b. Pine Ridge, N.S.W., 19 Nov. 1883.

⁸⁰ In addition to the casualties among Loone's machine-gunners, those with the 26th, under Lt. Prichard, also suffered from machine-gun fire.

⁸¹ Lt. P. J. Whittaker, M.C.; 26th Bn. Mechanic; of Kangaroo Point, Q'land; b. Guildford, W. Aust., 17 July 1895. Died 17 May 1936.

26th, had their telephone lines through to the objective within a few minutes of its capture.

Towards dawn, when Borella had watched about two companies of the enemy leaping, one man after the other, over some obstruction as they filed into Jaffa Trench, he observed them passing from hand to hand objects which, seen against the glare of the burning dugouts, he judged to be bundles of stick-bombs. As a counter-attack was obviously impending, he trickled his men a few yards back, just out of bomb-range, and fired the S.O.S. signal for artillery support. North of the railway similar action was taken by the 25th Battalion, which could see the Germans, thought to be 250 strong, moving along Jaffa Trench towards the Mound, and others creeping up in the crops. The S.O.S. signal brought down the barrage upon them—and also on Borella's party, which was far ahead of its objective—and rifles and Lewis guns opened at short range.

Although the Germans continued to dribble forward for ten minutes or more, no attack followed. Throughout the day, however, the German artillery heavily shelled their old firing line and also the Mound, and late in the afternoon numbers of the enemy were seen reinforcing. At 8.30 p.m. they began dribbling forward into the crops along their whole front. At 9 o'clock, when it was estimated that over 500 of them lay out ahead of the line, the German artillery opened heavily. Through the smoke and dust Lieut. Borella and his advanced party could see large numbers of the enemy advancing. Three machine-guns firing tracer bullets concentrated on Borella's position, forcing his men to keep low. The moment they eased, his party was up shooting and Borella fired the S.O.S., this time taking the precaution of ordering his men back to the true line of his objective. The artillery answered almost at the same moment. The Australian rifles and machine-guns again opened, at point-blank range and in good light. In the midst of this turmoil a British airman flew again and again at the enemy through the shell-smoke, firing his machine-gun. The counter-attack faded out like the first, and plainly with heavier loss.⁸²

The 7th Bde.'s attack had fallen on the centre and southern regiments of the 41st Divn. The history of the centre regiment (18th) says

⁸² Companies of the 27th and 28th which had moved up into support were not required to reinforce.

that, after beating back two attacks, its left company had to swing back, the company commander (Lt. Berndt) being wounded and captured. The line of the southern regiment (148th) was more deeply penetrated, the Australians reaching the eastern edge of "Acacia Wood" (the Mound) and throwing down the dugout there a phosphorus bomb which killed the acting commander of the III Bn. and his adjutant.

The 41st Divn. recognised that the advance had given the Australians "a favourable position especially as regards observation." Its records say that an immediate counter-attack threw the Australians back to the western part of the Mound. (This refers, of course, to Borella's withdrawal of his troops to his objective.) The division, however, ordered that the main line of resistance must be captured, and, in order that it might throw in its own reserves, was given the 137th I.R. (108th Divn.). The counter-attacks were attempted, as already described, at dawn and at 9 p.m.; the troops failed to reach the Australian position, but dug in (says the historian of the 18th I.R.) confronting their "always battle-eager" opponents. The 41st Divn. lost on July 17 and 18 nine officers and 285 others.

Two German officers and 68 men were captured.⁸³ The casualties of the 7th Australian Brigade in the attack were reported to be 6 officers and 123 others; but in the shelling on subsequent days the loss on both sides was considerably increased.⁸⁴

Further advance by the 2nd Division was now a forbidden activity—the French had still to come up on the flank. On the 16th⁸⁵ Rosenthal wrote: "I anticipate in a few days to have a nicely straightened line and the French will have ditto." That sturdy leader, however, on visiting the Mound on the morning of the 19th, resplendent in red staff cap and gorget patches, and accompanied by an equally conspicuous figure—the new commander of the 6th Brigade, Brig.-Genl. Campbell Robertson (who felt he could not don his steel helmet unless the divisional commander did likewise)—attracted the attention of a German sniper, who, with a single shot, severely wounded him.⁸⁶ On July 18th patrols of the 3rd Tirailleurs and 3rd Zouaves had felt their way into "Bertha" and "Krauss" Trenches, and on the night of the 21st bombing parties of the 23rd Battalion

⁸³ There were also taken 2 anti-tank field-guns, and 4 heavy and 11 light machine-guns.

⁸⁴ The 41st German Div. stated its loss for the week ended July 25 as 15 officers and 472 others.

⁸⁵ After visiting Generals Toulorge and Simon (37th Div.).

⁸⁶ The bullet hit Rosenthal in the thumb and forearm, severing an artery. The general was exercising, for him, particular caution—he had been warned against the deadly sniping at the east end of the Mound, and consequently was viewing the landscape from the western end. He tried to have his injuries dealt with locally, but General Howse (D.M.S., A.I.F.) packed him off to England.

assisted by thrusting down Stamboul and Craft Trenches,⁸⁷ where they established themselves together with the French who, however, were still a full mile behind the general alignment of the Australian front.

To summarise—barely had Haig's consent been given to the undertaking of a second "Hamel" than the object of it, so far as this could be effected by the Australian Corps, vanished: two infantry brigades, mainly by peaceful penetration, had secured the ground, 1,000 yards deep on a front of 4,500, while the formal plans for taking it were being made by the higher command. Their loss during the fortnight was 437—only 16 more than that of the two neighbouring brigades holding the line near Hamel. As for the Germans concerned—"this sort of warfare," says the adjutant of the 265th R.I.R., relieved on July 10th, "cost us more than a regular attack."⁸⁸

The policy and orders by which the action of the German troops throughout this phase had been governed were unknown until revealed by documents captured some weeks later.⁸⁹

**Influence
on German
tactics**

It will be remembered that in consequence of events at Ypres in September, 1917, Ludendorff changed his defensive policy from one of relying solely on counter-attack divisions to one of clinging tenaciously to the front line with considerable forces; and that a few days later, after the Battle of Broodseinde, he dramatically changed it again to one of holding the front with light outposts and, if seriously attacked, abandoning it and dislocating the assault by temporarily withdrawing, possibly for half a mile, to a real line of resistance in front of which the barrage of his artillery was to be quickly laid.⁹⁰ But, as Pétain found in the French Army, so did Ludendorff in the German, that it was one matter to order the adoption of this elastic system of defence, and quite

⁸⁷ Four Germans and two machine-guns were captured in this action. The 6th Bde. had relieved the 7th on the night of July 19.

⁸⁸ *History of 265th R.I.R.*, p. 281.

⁸⁹ The catastrophic events of the following month resulted in many of the official German records for this front coming to an end in July. Some of them, however, fell into the hands of the British staff.

⁹⁰ See Vol. IV, p. 881. His problem had been how to keep the German infantry intact from the terrific creeping barrages which on September 20 and 26 and October 4 had shattered both the garrisons in front and the support divisions trying to move up from the rear to counter-attack.

another to ensure that all subordinates adopted it. On the 26th of June, 1918, being ever more pressed by shortage of numbers for the offensive, and probably sensitive to the losses incurred of late by front-line garrisons in resisting the numerous minor attacks,⁹¹ Ludendorff renewed his insistence on it.⁹² "Now more than ever," divisions in the line must use a policy of "elastic avoidance, even on so-called 'unhealthy' fronts." It would often be impossible to make the front line continuous—it should comprise centres of resistance concealed, as far as possible, from observation.

No-Man's Land must be secured by mobile patrols in order to render enemy enterprises difficult in it.

But if the enemy attacked and part of the line was lost, he added, German commanders of all ranks must carefully consider whether it was really necessary for them to order that it should be retaken; "very often troops are, in the end, quite happy without the possession of a particular piece of ground or trench."

Two days after the issue of this order, the 152nd French Division of Mangin's army, together with part of the 11th Division and tanks, penetrated 2,000 yards and took 1,200 prisoners. On the same day two British divisions attacking near Hazebrouck captured over 400.⁹³ On July 3rd Mangin's troops again made a small attack, capturing 1,100 prisoners, and next day the Australian Corps in the Hamel fighting captured 1,600. On July 6th Ludendorff made his order more peremptory.

The enemy's repeated breaks-through during the last few days, and the large numbers of prisoners which he has thus unfortunately captured, demonstrate that our forward defence is too dense and that the depth of the outpost zone is not sufficient⁹⁴ . . . outpost zones from

⁹¹ Largely those of French and American troops between the Oise and the Marne, and of Australians at Morlancourt and Hazebrouck.

⁹² As the German policy was then offensive, he laid even more insistence on light "modern" methods in attack. His reason was, as previously stated to von Kuhl: "Munitions are ample, men are scarce."

⁹³ The 1st Aust. Div. also assisted (*see pp. 403-7*).

⁹⁴ He added: "The enemy has imitated our surprise concentration of artillery fire, and has thereby obtained successes similar to our own. We must do our utmost to think out the correct reply to this." The surprise concentration of artillery had, however, been employed by the British command in the Battle of Cambrai, 20 Nov. 1917. It would be surprising if Ludendorff did not realise this. In his *War Memories* (p 494) he admits the "surprise" and the "heavy bombardment." Possibly he undervalued the part of the artillery in that action.

100 to 200 metres in depth do not suffice; they are only permissible if our positions are strongly organised and if very strong artillery support is available. They must be deeper, *i.e.*, 500 to 1,000 metres or more, especially where the position has not yet been developed and the available artillery is weak.

The troops actually in the outpost-line, he said, should not be disposed too deeply; the posts, patrols, and pickets there must be prepared to carry on "an active outpost warfare" with the help and support of fire from the rifles and artillery defending the main line behind them. "This warfare does not differ from an attack against hostile nests, in which it is necessary to work round the strong-points" (he was, in fact, enjoining on his troops just such tactics as the Diggers were practising). The troops must be alert and must reconnoitre. But when an enemy attack was systematically prepared by artillery, there must be no attempt to resist at the outpost-line—the forward zone must be abandoned. A new main line of resistance might have to be formed later, but German commanders and troops need not fear that they would thus lose many kilometres of ground. "The Entente . . . are just as hard up for men for such attacks as we are." Attacks by the French and British should only give a welcome chance of inflicting losses, he said, for they generally attacked in dense lines. Therefore, if there was any doubt whether the garrison of the outpost-line should be withdrawn or maintained,

the decision should be to withdraw it. It is always better to accept this loss of ground than to incur losses in the outpost zone.

Crown Prince Rupprecht in his diary that day asks how can Ludendorff's new instruction be carried out with the weak troops of the trench divisions? "We will be continuously forced back with a considerable loss of men who through this isolated method of warfare are taken prisoners by the enemy. That our enemy attacks us generally in dense lines has long ceased to be the case." Nevertheless all German commanders immediately passed on the effect of the order to their troops. Second Army, in enjoining that the forward zone must be increased to 500-1,000 metres in depth, excepted the Ancre and Avre bridge-heads, and directed that the change must be concealed so that the enemy would not conclude that the Germans were acting merely on the defensive. XI Corps (south of the Somme opposite the right half of the Australian Corps) laid down that the

forward zone must be lightly held, the outposts to give way before any fairly strong attack. The zone must contain strong-points, where the ground favoured them, and scattered machine-gun nests; and the position of the main line behind it must as far as possible be concealed from the enemy. If the main line was pierced, it must be retaken by the troops in reserve.

The day of this order, July 8th, was the very one on which patrols of the 27th Battalion seized the forward line of the 108th Division between the Roman road and the railway. The 108th Division was, as already stated, then in process of being relieved by the 41st, whose commander that day carefully explained to his subordinates the order from army and corps. Next day (probably again repeating an order from XI Corps) he had to issue the following:

At 11 a.m.⁹⁵ on 8 July the enemy penetrated the forward zone of the 108th Divn. by means of large patrols without artillery preparation, and at 10 p.m. on the same day with artillery preparation astride the Marcel-cave-Villers-Bretonneux railway. He occupied the trench where our most advanced outpost lay, and apparently captured the occupants, comprising 15 men. The larger part of the forward zone has been lost.

A few days later the Second Army commander, General von der Marwitz, in an order referred to the same incident:

In one place there was neither visual nor any other connection between the outpost-line and the company, so that the removal of the former by the enemy was not even noticed: counter-attacks followed too late and were a complete failure.

To prevent recurrence of such losses the commander of the 41st Division, in his order of July 9th, directed:

The pickets must protect their flanks and rear by continuous observation as our enemy, who has grown up in the Australian bush, wriggles up to our posts with great dexterity from the flank and rear in order to overwhelm us. In the case of the present trench division (108th) it has often happened that *complete* pickets have disappeared in the forward zone without a trace. . . . I expect the (41st) division to remember its good reputation in undertaking the serious task which has been set it here.

On the day on which this order was issued, the small patrols of the 28th Battalion seized the German front and support lines at Monument Wood, which were, of course, much more lightly held than when the 48th attacked there on May 3rd, the garrison having probably been thinned out again after Luden-

⁹⁵ The German time was noon.

dorff's recent order. The events of July 9th were capped by those of the French attack at Castel on July 12th, when (according to Crown Prince Rupprecht) the two southernmost divisions of the Second German Army evacuated their forward zone and the bridgehead there. But it appears to have been chiefly the state of affairs in front of Villers-Bretonneux that caused the commander of the Second Army on July 13th to order what was really a reversal of the spirit in which Ludendorff's order had been carried out. He complains that the trouble was due to haste and thoughtlessness in putting that order into force.

During the last few days the "English" have succeeded in penetrating or taking prisoner single posts or pickets. They have gradually, sometimes even in daylight, succeeded in getting possession of the greater part of the forward zone of a division.

The tactical situation of a great part of the army front zone has, owing to this, been considerably impaired. The reason for this has chiefly lain in the fact that the garrisons of the forward zone were immediately set out in accordance with the orders of the army dated 6th July, before the local conditions had been accurately examined and before the principles for the conduct of the fighting in the forward zone could be instilled into the troops. [Here follows the reference, already quoted, to the capture of 15 men on July 8.] Co-operation with the artillery by means of special batteries for the forward zone has not yet been worked out.

Marwitz then describes the function of the troops in the forward zone—that of delaying the attacking troops and preventing surprise of the main-line garrison—in very different wording from that of Ludendorff:

Troops must fight. They must not give way at every opportunity and seek to avoid fighting; otherwise they will get the feeling that the enemy is superior to them. . . . The best way to make the enemy more careful in his attempt to drive us bit by bit out of the outpost-line and forward zone is to do active reconnaissance and carry out patrol encounters oneself. In this respect absolutely nothing seems to have been done. If the enemy can succeed in scoring a success without any special support by artillery or assistance from special troops, we must be in a position to do the same.⁹⁶

⁹⁶ On the German side prizes were being given for prisoners. On July 2 the commander of the neighbouring 202nd R.I.R. (43rd Res. Div.) at Hamel, had announced: "As daily reports show that enemy patrols are to be found every night in No-Man's Land . . . I will give three weeks' leave to the first man who brings in a prisoner or equipment enabling us to identify the regiment holding the opposite sector." Marwitz's order of July 13 advised commanders to encourage their troops, for the sake of morale as well as to secure information, to undertake such expeditions. (This is what the Germans opposed to the Australians had attempted during the winter of 1917-18, with curious results—see *Vol. V*, pp. 41-4.) But von der Marwitz adds that he recognises the difficult situation of his infantry—that is, presumably, of the "trench" divisions.

It was on the morning after this order was issued, July 14th, that the Germans made, near Accroche Wood, their one partly successful cutting-out expedition against the posts advanced by the 39th Battalion.⁹⁷ The XI Corps, in passing on Marwitz's directions, added that the troops must at all costs be made to feel superior to the Australian enemy.⁹⁸ On July 25th, after the next fighting, in which the Mound was taken from his troops, the commander of the 41st Division reported: "The fighting power of the 18th and 148th I.R. is diminished as the result of losses in the last engagements, the constant state of readiness, and the almost unbroken period in line for all companies." He expected further local thrusts by the Australians on both sides of the Roman road, but was looking forward to the readjustment which would take place when the new line of resistance (then being prepared close behind the present one) was ready.

There is evidence for concluding that German commanders in contact with their forward troops on the Villers-Bretonneux front noted a feeling that their opponents possessed the ascendancy, and feared that their men—in view of the deterioration in their quality and of other current developments—would be demoralised by interpreting Ludendorff's policy as a sanction for abandoning any stubborn resistance at the front line. This attitude had long been marked also on the Morlancourt front, where, though Australian commanders held the conditions unsuitable for any attempt to imitate the operations at Villers-Bretonneux, silent raids as well as more formal thrusts had placed the enemy under heavy and constant strain.

So far as is ascertainable from the records available in Australia, comparable events were occurring on only two other parts of the British front—the sectors of the New Zealand Division near Hébuterne and of the 1st Australian at Hazebrouck. To the last-named the narrative must now revert.

⁹⁷ See pp. 347-8.

⁹⁸ The official estimate of their Australian opponents given by the 13th Div. to its troops in an order of July 11 was: "The enemy belongs to the Australian Army Corps, is exceedingly alert, strong in artillery and trench-mortars, very fond of making attacks and raids with or without artillery assistance. . . . He works energetically and eagerly on his trenches and wire and thrusts posts and machine-gun nests forward into No-Man's Land."

CHAPTER XI

"PEACEFUL PENETRATION"—ITS CLIMAX AT HAZEBROUCK

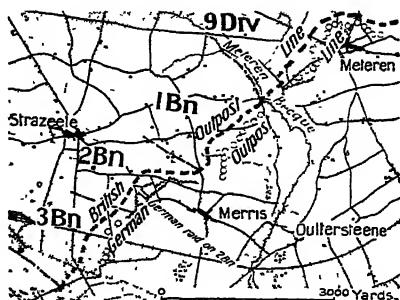
If the successes achieved by peaceful penetration on the Somme had in the end more important tactical results, on the front of the 1st Division at Hazebrouck their moral effect was even greater. It has already been stated that German divisions sent by the higher command to this supposedly quiet front were finishing their month's tour there with such relief as has caused more than one of their historians to write: "Our bloody tour in the line at Merris had found its end."¹ When this narrative left it the 1st Australian Division, in order to obtain some rest for its troops, was holding a diminished front with only one brigade; and its troops and commanders—as, also, the German—were contemplating with some anxiety the growth of the green crops close in front of and around the trench-lines and outposts.

Here, as on the Somme, these crops were quickly found to give extraordinary advantages to adventurous troops; but here in Flanders exploring expeditions also found convenient cover for their approaches in the network of hedges and ditches which in Picardy was absent. Soon after Sergt. Bruggy's "one-man" raid on May 22nd² the patrols found the German resistance more alert; on the night of May 25th the enemy was reported to be much more aggressive than usual. At dusk he even tried to raid some posts of the 2nd Battalion north-west of Merris. The bombardment from guns and trench-mortars had fallen mainly behind its targets. A flare was then fired by the Germans, evidently as a starting signal; but its light also illuminated their own party running in a single line towards

¹ See p. 60.

² See pp. 54-5. On the next night the Royal Engineers fired 1,178 drums of phosphene at Merris during a British bombardment; 11 Germans were killed and 121 gassed of whom 16 died.

the posts. Fire was opened and the Germans were driven into shell-holes 100 yards away.³ As usual an Australian patrol searched the ground afterwards in the hope that the enemy raiders would have left some dead or wounded whose unit could thus be ascertained, but on this occasion none was found.⁴ On the night of the 26th Australian reports stated that the Germans were "very alert" and "working hard" on their forward defences. On that of the 27th, when a patrol, fifteen strong, under Lieut. Chedghey,⁵ of the 1st Battalion tried silently to rush a post in the valley of the Meteren Becque, the party was seen approaching and the Germans shot and bombed vigorously until it had almost reached them, when they ran scattering. They left nothing by which they could be identified, and Chedghey's party, in which himself and seven others were wounded, had one of its men missing.



The temporary stiffening of the German defence was explained when on this same night a patrol under Lieut. Nixon,⁶ 3rd Battalion, managed to rush a machine-gun post on the southern slope of the Mont de Merris, killing a couple of Germans and capturing three. The prisoners were found to belong to a fresh division, the 13th Reserve,⁷ which had just relieved the 12th Division.

The captured men of the 57th R.I.R. said that they had been told that they were coming to a quiet front for a rest after their harsh experiences at Kemmel. The historians of the two other regiments of the division each mention that the front was imagined by the command

³ The failure is noted in the history of the artillery of the 12th German Div.

⁴ On the same night the Germans raided the 9th (Scottish) Div., which had now taken over the front about Meteren on the left of the 1st Australian. Here, after intense bombardment, the Germans had the luck to take some prisoners.

⁵ Lt. H. V. Chedghey, 1st Bn. Solicitor; of Arndcliffe, N.S.W.; b. Waverley, N.S.W., 31 May 1892.

⁶ Lt. J. S. Nixon, 3rd Bn. Grocer; of Redfern, N.S.W.; b. Seskinore, County Tyrone, Ireland, 23 Apr. 1886.

⁷ The prisoners were of the 57th R.I.R. The division included also the 13th and 39th R.I.R's.

to be "comparatively quiet." "But we did not notice anything of the sort," adds the historian of the 13th R.I.R., "and if we entertained any idea that the enemy would be diverted by the great new German offensive begun on May 27 (in Champagne) . . . and so allow us to prepare in peace for the launching of our offensive—the 'Hagen' attack planned to take place later (in Flanders)—from the first day of our appearance in this sector we were forced to face a different and uglier truth." After describing the bombardment by artillery and aeroplanes that tortured the troops, this account says: "To us in the front line, facing the enemy, it seemed grotesque that the men of our support battalion, at the cost of losses on the bombarded roads of approach, had to bring up engineer stores and ammunition for the 'Hagen' attack, while the front line battalion in the incomplete main line of resistance could scarcely hold its position." The historian of the 39th R.I.R. says that the truth, that the sector was not a quiet one, became evident at once. "Opposite, overlooking us, the 'English,' wideawake and keen on enterprises, who in sporting spirit took every target under fire, active and virile crept up in the high corn and made the lives of our posts and patrols very difficult."

The first formal enterprise now undertaken by the 1st Australian Division was a small but costly one carried out by the 10th Battalion (South Australia) in order to push forward on the southern side of the spur (here called "Mont de Merris," the tops of the ruined roofs and brick walls of Merris three-quarters of a mile lower down being just visible above the crops). The troops came in fresh on May 28th, the 3rd Brigade that day relieving the 1st. The advance began forthwith and was divided into two stages as follows:

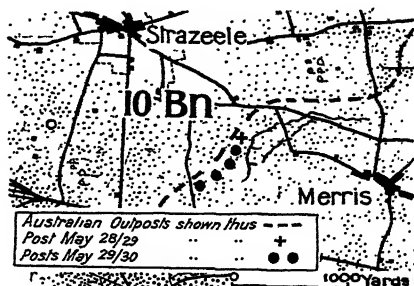
On the night of 28th May a post was put out on the left of the 10th Bn., a feat easily achieved though in course of it a German post had to be taken. On the next night, under a barrage of artillery and trench-mortars, a line of German outposts south of this was attacked by a company. The field artillery was to lay down during the night several short "crash" bombardments, one of them at 11.30, the hour for the attack. This crash, lasting for a minute, fell upon the company of the 10th lying ready—2 officers and 20 men were hit by their own shells. But the barrage of the trench-mortars and of an improvised battery of rifle-grenadiers organised by Lt.-Col. Neligan from cooks and others at his headquarters, was excellently laid, and the three attacking platoons went on. Though at some posts the Germans clambered out of their trenches to resist them, and others poured in a heavy fire from Gutzer Farm and another house on the southern flank, the posts were seized. They had to be consolidated under fire. The Germans twice counter-attacked during the process but were beaten off.

Casualties had been heavy—Lts. Reid⁸ and Goode⁹ leading their

⁸ Lt. H. W. Reid, M.C.; 10th Bn. Engineering draughtsman; of Omeo, Vic.; b. Hinomunje, Vic., 16 Oct. 1890.

⁹ Lt. A. H. Goode. 10th Bn. Warehouseman; of Adelaide; b. Adelaide, 8 Oct. 1881.

platoons were both wounded badly, and later the company commander, Lt. Hill, and Lt. Corcoran,¹⁰ whom he sent up to replace casualties, were mortally hit. Lt. Blake, though wounded in the barrage, bombed a German machine-gun nest that was causing casualties, and brought back the lock of the gun. Lt. Smith,¹¹ sent up with a platoon of another company to reinforce, was also wounded. The 1st Divn.'s casualties this day were 8 officers and 89 others killed or wounded, mostly through this operation. The line was advanced about 150 yards on a front of 700.¹² One prisoner, of the 57th R.I.R., was taken.



The stubbornness of the opposing Germans was noticeable for some days longer. On the night of the 30th Sergt. Turner,¹³ a well-known scout of the 12th Battalion, with a patrol of ten some distance south of the railway found a German post and, after discussion, decided to rush it. It contained four Germans, all of whom fought toughly. Three were killed, but the fourth escaped and gave the alarm, thus preventing the party from searching the bodies for marks of identification. The Tasmanians had to withdraw quickly with the captured machine-gun. Next day (May 31st) on the other flank of the division's front, Pte. Knight¹⁴ of the 9th Battalion, after crawling through the wheat crop to examine a trench which Lieut. Gower believed to be empty, lifted a sack on the parapet and found in the niche beneath it a German N.C.O. resting. The German at once raised a shout for his comrades. Knight shot him, but men now came running along the trench towards him. The first was about to throw a bomb, but Knight shot him and dashed into the wheat. The Lewis gunners and snipers

¹⁰ Lt. T. L. Corcoran, M.C.; 10th Bn. Guard, S. Aust. Railways; of Mt. Gambier, S. Aust.; b. Mt. Gambier, 7 Aug. 1890. Died of wounds, 30 May 1918.

¹¹ Lt. R. G. Smith, M.C.; 10th Bn. Clerk; of Unley, S. Aust.; b. Unley, 24 Feb. 1892.

¹² The 12th Bn. also moved forward a post on the southern flank.

¹³ Lt. G. W. Turner, D.C.M., M.M.; 12th Bn. Brass-turner; of Launceston, Tas.; b. Young Town, Tas., 10 Jan. 1892.

¹⁴ Pte. R. P. Knight, M.M. (No. 7142; 9th Bn.). Labourer; of Bellingen, N.S.W.; b. Lewisham, London, Eng., 21 Jan. 1900.

in the Australian posts were on the look-out, and, seeing the Germans running along their trench, opened fire, forcing them to keep down and so allowing Knight to escape without harm.

At this stage there was undertaken the first of several more important attacks made by the 1st Division during the summer, with the object of seizing the main defences of Merris, which were none other than the old trench-lines, originally dug during the Battle of the Lys by the British, on the top of the ridge north-west of the village. The attack was first proposed on May 14th, when the British intelligence received the impression that the German commanders were thinning their front here in order to rest and train their troops for some impending blow. It was desired to pin these troops down, and British Second Army at first envisaged a rather extensive operation, with Merris village as second objective, the whole front of the 1st Division being advanced and Meteren being seized by the 9th (Scottish) Division on the left at the same time;¹⁵ but, probably through lack of resources, it was eventually decided that the undertaking should be much smaller: the Australian brigade that was holding the line would carry it out, attacking only the Mont de Merris position. The flanking divisions should merely create diversions, the 29th Division on the right seizing some farms on the Vieux Berquin lowlands, and the 9th Division on the left feigning an assault on Meteren.

The main advance was made on the night of June 2nd by the 3rd Brigade's reserve battalion—the 11th (Western Australia). The following is an account of the action:

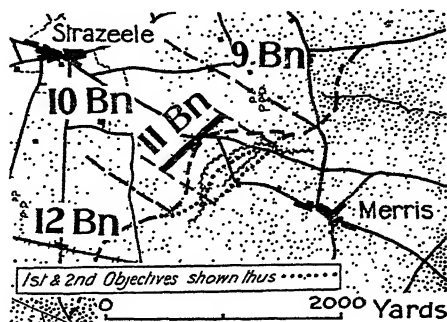
The 11th lined up on a jumping-off tape laid for 800 yards across the spur, in most parts close behind the outposts of the 10th, a platoon of which was also to go forward on each flank. The **Mont de Merris** control of the sector for the night was transferred to Lt.-Col. Newman of the 11th.¹⁶ The operation had been closely studied by officers and men with aeroplane photographs and a model of the ground, and a practice had been carried out the night before near Pradelles, actually at times under German shell-fire. In this attack—probably in consequence of the experience on May 29th, and in view of the fact that part of the first German trench was only 130 yards away—the field artillery barrage was laid fifty yards short of

¹⁵ Maj.-Gen. Walker and Br.-Gen. Lesslie (whose brigade, the 1st, was at one time intended to make the attack) both desired this.

¹⁶ For this night the "nucleus battalion," formed from the nucleus left out of the fight by each battalion of the brigade, came up and served as brigade reserve. The 8th Bn. (2nd Bde.) was in close support.

the second objective (the chord trench), the first trench being bombarded only by light and medium trench-mortars and by rifle-grenadiers, including again Neligan's improvised "headquarters battery" under the regimental sergeant-major, E. A. Holland.¹⁷ The Stokes mortars of the 1st Light Trench Mortar Battery were added to those of the 3rd, and these combined to throw more than 2,000 shells during the engagement. The medium trench-mortars shelled the second objective and a nest held by the enemy in front of it on the right, and the heavy artillery threw its fire farther back.

The troops of the 11th were led up to the starting position by guides of the 10th, whose intelligence officer and scouts also laid the tapes, and the assembly of the



troops though close to the enemy was carried out so silently that no suspicion of it seems to have been aroused. It was barely finished when, at 1 o'clock, the barrage fell; many reports afterwards described it as excellent. The troops, with white arm-bands to distinguish them in the dark,¹⁸ moved in sections in file, with a light screen of riflemen ahead, and, after getting close to the shell-bursts, the two companies forming the first wave rushed the first trench as the barrage uncovered it. It was found to be well garrisoned; on the left, where it ran through a hop field, some of the posts fought, but on the right about eighty Germans in all surrendered. When, at 1.10, after allowing eight minutes for the clearing of the first objective, the barrage lifted from the chord trench, the second wave advanced upon this. To guide the troops the artillery every minute burst one incendiary shell, giving a brilliant glare, at a bend of the Merris road, straight ahead of the centre. In this stage the German posts met with were scattered ones. The advancing platoons worked round them, according to their now almost automatic procedure, and one after another was quickly taken. The platoon of the 10th on the right seized Gutzer Farm, surprising a machine-gun crew north-west of it, and later pushed up a trench on the right, taking 21 prisoners. The success signal—a rocket bursting into red, green, and red—was seen by observers of the 3rd Brigade at 1.47.¹⁹

As constantly happened in these small, shallow, formal advances, scattered German machine-gun nests, mostly at some distance in the country beyond the objective, continued to fire, their bullets causing loss among the men digging in.²⁰ The barrage had slackened at 1.30 and

¹⁷ Warrant Officer E. A. Holland, D.C.M. (No. 503; 10th Bn.). Miner; of Broken Hill, N.S.W.; b. Mile End, S. Aust., 8 Aug. 1889. Member of Coronation Contingent, 1937. Died 30 Nov. 1940.

¹⁸ After nightfall also the posts of the 10th Bn. had been marked with flags in order to prevent an attack upon them by mistake.

¹⁹ The success flares to be fired by the foremost troops would not go off, and this rocket was therefore probably late.

²⁰ In silent patrol operations they might not have been aroused.

ceased ten minutes later, the task of protecting the troops being then taken up by Lewis gunners and rifle-grenadiers thrust out in front of the line. Sgt.-Maj. Holland of the 10th with his improvised battery helped materially to cover the diggers at this stage.²¹ Patrols worked everywhere and some of the nearer nests were rushed. The platoon of the 10th digging on the right flank found itself less advanced than the 11th, and at 2 o'clock moved forward into alignment. Farther south the left company of the 12th Bn. had seized the chance of swinging its flank far forward and, largely through the work of Sgt. Vickers,²² sixteen prisoners were taken. The platoon of the 10th on the extreme left also had taken many prisoners and its patrols secured that flank. Vickers guns in forward positions protected the right. Parties of the 10th carried supplies and, with engineers, dug a communication trench. By 3.30 the front was quiet. At dawn the observer in the contact aeroplane, on tooting his horn for flares, saw them shine out below him all along the line of the Australian objective. The 29th Divn. took Lug and Ankle Farms west of Vieux Berquin.

The small affair had been a thorough success; the 3rd Brigade had about 100 casualties, chiefly in the 11th Battalion;²³ 5 German officers and 253 others with 27 machine-guns and 17 trench-mortars were captured²⁴—here again instruction previously given in the working of German machine-guns proved useful.

Headquarters of the III Bavarian Army Corps reported that its Meteren front had been attacked, the action extending as far south as the Bailleul-Hazebrouck railway. The 79th and 81st Res. Divns. (at Meteren) had apparently reported that the English trenches opposite them were filled with men, but that the German machine-gun fire had prevented these from launching their attack. The Corps staff evidently suspected that the activity was a feint except where the attack actually fell—in front of the centre regiment (13th R.I.R.) of its left division (13th Reserve) and the two adjoining companies of the 39th and 57th R.I.R.'s on the north and south respectively. These troops, the report says, accurately enough, were overrun, encircled, and caught in flank and rear. The historian of the 13th R.I.R. says that its II Bn. had just taken over the front from the III, after a long march, and had not yet got its bearings, "which perhaps explains the heavy losses." Res.-Lt. Buschhaus and a few men held out for a short time in the main line of resistance. Then "with a cheer he throws himself against the enemy established in rear of him, but only four men break through and reach Merris, and they are the only ones able to tell us what had happened." Of the rest—three companies and one platoon—and their commanders, "nothing whatever is heard." Two platoons of the 8th company and two heavy machine-gun crews were farther back, in the west of Merris

²¹ Holland was wounded.

²² Sgt. W. Vickers, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 1480; 12th Bn.). Winch driver; of North Dandalup, W. Aust.; b. Eaton Constantine, Shropshire, Eng., 17 Sep. 1896.

²³ It lost 4 officers (including Lt. A. R. Retchford, of Kalgoorlie, W. Aust., who was killed) and 87 others.

²⁴ An anti-tank gun also lay abandoned, in the new No-Man's Land.

and the hedges south of it, and these got touch with the 57th farther south. Later two companies of the I Bn. came up on the north and occupied the hedges astride of the Strazeele-Merris road. Of the right flank regiment, 39th R.I.R., Res.-Lt. Franke and his company were captured. The commander of the 1st company, farther north, tried to counter-attack, but his ration parties were away, leaving the company much too weak. The gap was blocked by half the 3rd company, whose commander was killed while doing this.

The total loss was reported by the Corps to be 15 officers and about 396 others, of whom 10 officers and about 330 others belonged to the 13th Res. Divn.

Corps headquarters recognised that the ground was valuable—the troops had lost their view over their opponent's lines and its artillery the control over his approaches. It was therefore at first intended that the 13th Res. Divn. should counter-attack. Later, as its fighting value was considered too low, it was decided to throw in the 4th Bav. Divn. instead. On June 5, however, the Corps decided against making any counter-attack; the disadvantages suffered "were not so great as to justify the sacrifice which the recovery of the lost ground would certainly entail." Accordingly the relief by the 4th Bav. Divn. was countermanded.

The flank of the III Bavarian Corps lay near the railway. It was south of this, in the sector of the 44th Res. Divn., that the 29th Brit. Divn. had attacked. The history of the 208th R.I.R. mentions the loss of two farms and of the factory.²⁵ A counter-attack made by the 208th on the following night after a short bombardment was stopped by the British barrage.

It had been intended that the 12th Battalion, farther south on the railway, should on the next night quietly advance its posts there, which were now well behind the alignment of the front. In trying to capture a tree-lined field south of the railway, however, Lieut. Wertheimer²⁶ met German posts that were keenly alert. He was killed and his party might have been cut off had not Lieut. Wardlaw²⁷ and Sergt. Turner and some men moved out from the railway and fired into the enemy's flank while the patrol got clear. The night was much disturbed by artillery fire, and it was not until June 5th and 6th that the 2nd Brigade, having relieved the 3rd, quietly advanced its outposts here a quarter of a mile.

All German accounts say that the duty of the German divisions holding this and the neighbouring fronts in Flanders

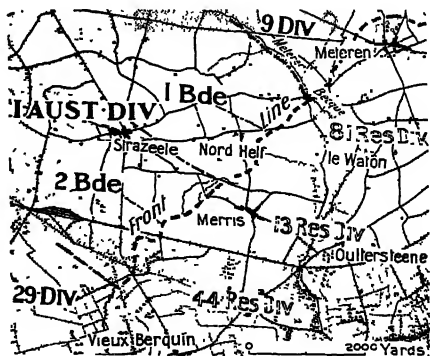
²⁵ Two German N.C.O's, however, who had been captured in the first attack, returned with an English officer, whom they, turning the tables, had made prisoner; and another German prisoner got away from behind the British line with a Lewis gun.

²⁶ Lt. A. T. Wertheimer, 12th Bn. Surveyor's assistant; of Bellerive, Tas.; b. Carlton, Vic., 17 Apr. 1894. Killed in action, 4 June 1918.

²⁷ Lt. Hon. A. L. Wardlaw, C.M.G.; 12th Bn. Station manager; of Ringarooma, Tas., b. Avoca, Tas., 23 July 1887. Died 24 Dec. 1938.

was to prepare their sectors as the leaping-off ground of the great attack that was to be made against the British as soon as the Allies' reserves had been sufficiently diverted by the offensives on the French front. Meanwhile the trench divisions were to hold the line, despite shortage of reinforcements, while the army for the offensive trained and rested in rear of them. The British command in Flanders, being aware that this large force, varying from 26 to 31 divisions, was resting behind Crown Prince Rupprecht's front, and seeing that hospitals, aerodromes, railway sidings, dumps, roads, and bridges had long since been made ready by the enemy in evident preparation for delivering a great attack, was in constant expectation of it; and whenever, as happened before each German offensive in the south, prisoners spoke of some big thrust impending, Second Army and its corps sent out warnings and ordered instant readiness. These orders were often regarded by the troops, who had to spend the supposedly dangerous nights in manning their battle-positions, as due simply to the strained nerves of the high command—headquarters, in their language, "had the wind up"—but German histories have proved the expectations to be exceedingly well grounded.

One such warning had foreshadowed a probable offensive on May 25th; and early in June, when the German offensive of May 27th on the Aisne had drawn reserves thither, an early attack in the north was considered most probable. On June 3rd the 1st Division issued a warning that the enemy "may become active any day." The order added that, as the army commander, General Plumer, attached great importance to the Strazeele spur, he had



decided that the 1st Australian Division must now reoccupy its front there with two brigades. Accordingly, on June 8th the

1st Brigade came in and took over the northern half of the 2nd Brigade's front, with its left on the Meteren stream.²⁸ Each brigade had a front of about 2,300 yards; each put two battalions into the line (half in the outpost-system, half in the support line 1,000 yards in rear). The trench strength of the companies averaged, probably, at most 90 men. On the other side of No-Man's Land the German 13th Reserve Division held a considerably shorter front²⁹ normally with three battalions (one from each regiment) in the front line, and three in support one or two kilometres in rear. Its companies averaged little more than 50, with about 70 light-machine gunners per battalion. The strength of the Australians was, therefore, about the same as that of the Germans in the forward area, but their division had many more troops in rest. On the other hand the German divisions here were relieved each month, whereas the 1st Australian was continuously in the line from April until the beginning of August.

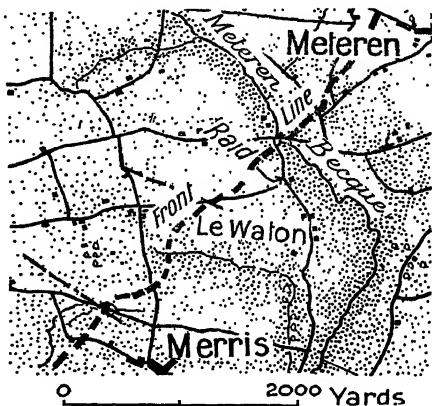
The German attack expected early in June fell, as the reader will recall, on June 9th, not in Flanders, but upon the French at Noyon. In spite of this Prince Rupprecht still maintained his big reserve, and the threat to the British Army in Flanders increased in proportion as its reserves were constantly drawn away to the French. Prisoners indicated that an offensive would be launched on June 16th; later the day mentioned was June 25th. Each day passed without any blow falling, but it can be understood how keen was the staff to have a constant stream of prisoners for information.

It is safe to say that, during these anxious months, from no other sector came such a stream of prisoners as from that of the 1st Australian Division. No sooner had the 2nd Brigade relieved the 3rd than its rested troops, who knew that raids, which they hated, would otherwise be necessary, began their incessant "exploring." Their opponents, apparently, were be-

²⁸ The 1st Bde. was now under Br.-Gen. Iven Mackay, formerly of the 4th Bn., Br.-Gen. Lesslie, who had been with the force since 1914, having on June 7 been given command of the 190th Bde. of the 63rd (Royal Naval) Div.

²⁹ The 1st Aust. Div. held from the Meteren Becque in the north to the Plate Becque south of the railway. Its left flank captured prisoners from the 81st Res. Div., its right flank, south of the railway, from the 44th Res. Div. The sector of the 13th Res. Div. lay between these; it was some 1,200 yards shorter than that of the 1st Australian—that is, 3,400 yards as against 4,600. (The history of the 13th R.I.R. gives the width of its divisional front as about 2,000 metres, and of the regimental front as 500, but this appears to be an understatement.)

coming weary, for in the records of the ensuing week mention of the enemy's resistance is markedly absent. Soon after dawn on June 7th Corpl. Reilly³⁰ of the 5th Battalion, from a post 200 yards from the bank of the Meteren Becque,³¹ together with Corpl. Schwab³² and Pte. Gardner³³ crept 200 yards through the crop to where a patch of it had been mown, evidently in front of a German post, and then, quietly looking about them, saw two Germans asleep in a shell-hole only a biscuit-throw away.³⁴ They crawled to the sleeping men, awakened and captured them, and returned with the prisoners, not a shot being fired at the expedition.



Three hours later, in a post a quarter of a mile from the Becque, Sergt. Morrison³⁵ of the 5th decided (as he said afterwards, "for a bit of sport") to see if he could extract some Germans from another post whose position—close beyond a road through the crop—he and his men knew. After arranging with a fellow sergeant to open fire with a Lewis gun if the expedition was attacked, he, with L.-Corpl. Simms³⁶ and Pte. Hastings,³⁷ crawled 100 yards to the road. Here their comrades, watching in the Australian post, saw them stand up to look round above the crop, and then evidently enter the trench. Morrison, who

³⁰ Lt. J. V. Reilly, D.C.M.; 5th Bn. Orchardist; of Blackburn, Vic.; b. Dundrum, Dublin, Ireland, 14 Feb. 1896.

³¹ This was before the 1st Bde. took over the northern sub-sector.

³² Cpl. E. Schwab, M.M. (No. 1612; 5th Bn.). Labourer; of Camberwell, Vic.; b. Surrey Hills, Vic.; 13 Apr. 1892.

³³ Cpl. T. H. C. Gardner M.M. (No. 584; 5th Bn.). School teacher; of Kew, Vic.; b. Nundah, Q'land, 4 June 1894.

³⁴ The post was screened by leaving a few inches of crop.

³⁵ Sgt. A. T. Morrison, D.C.M. (No. 907; 5th Bn.). Mechanic; of Ripponlea, Vic.; b. Northcote, Vic., 21 Sep. 1889. Died 24 Jan. 1938.

³⁶ Lt. W. A. M. Simms, M.M.; 5th Bn. Insurance clerk; of Richmond, Vic.; b. Tranmere, Cheshire, Eng., 30 Jan. 1897.

³⁷ Pte. S. P. Hastings, M.M. (No. 5707; 5th Bn.). Labourer; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 18 Dec. 1882.

went along it, afterwards reported that ten yards down the trench he saw

one German asleep and another round the corner packing his kit. Bailed them up while they kicked like blazes. In a second dugout was a stretcher-bearer, and in a third a sergeant and corporal. The sergeant was nasty and tried to get the stick-bombs and Mills grenades.³⁸

The spectators saw four Germans appear successively, holding their hands above their heads and, a few yards farther along, two more.

Morrison got on the parapet and motioned them to walk along the trench towards our line. They were unwilling, so Morrison threw clods of dirt at them.³⁹

He brought all six back, and then went out to rejoin his mates who meanwhile had found three more and a machine-gun. The Germans in the neighbouring posts were now aroused and firing at the intruders, but, though a machine-gun opened, the party with its prisoners returned safely to the Australian line.

Barely had this happened when, at 10.45 Lieut. Parker from another post close down by the Becque set out with three men to capture a post in the crops only 250 yards north-east of the trench raided by Morrison. When twenty yards away the four Australians were seen, so they rushed the post at once. They found it to be a garrisoned trench; in a brisk fight they killed or wounded eight of the enemy. They then retired unharmed, but without having been able to identify their opponents.

That night on the centre of the division's front two large patrols of the 6th Battalion under Lieut. McIntosh⁴⁰ and Coy. Q.M.Sgt. Kirby⁴¹ tried to raid two German posts in the new enemy line astride the Strazeele road. The Germans ran but the Victorians brought back a machine-gun from one post and a German pack from the other.

³⁸ These were British bombs found by the Germans at Merris.

³⁹ The quotation is from an account in *Reveille*, April, 1938.

⁴⁰ Lt. W. A. McIntosh, M.C.; 6th Bn. School teacher; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Geelong, Vic., 3 May 1893.

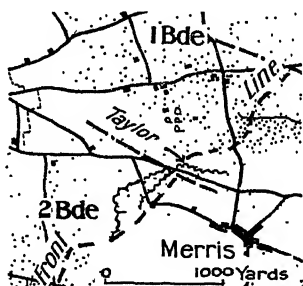
⁴¹ C.Q.M.Sgt. H. Kirby, D.C.M. (No. 102; 6th Bn.). Labourer; of Kew, Vic.; b. Kew, 6 Mar. 1895. Killed in action, 23 Aug. 1918.

The sallies of the 5th Bn. were made against posts of the 267th R.I.R., belonging to the 81st Res. Divn., which in May had been inserted between the Meteren and Merris sectors. It reported a company sergeant-major and ten men missing. The regiment assumed that the post attacked by Morrison had then been retained by the Australians, and its history states that on the 10th, just before the division was withdrawn, two parties of the 267th led by officers counter-attacked the post. As they approached they were scattered by artillery fire, but one party entered the trench and reoccupied it. "Thirty" Australians were said to have been seen withdrawing from it. (At 1.30 a.m. on the 10th one of the 1st Aust. Bn.'s posts, after being bombarded, saw Germans moving on its front and drove them off.)

The posts raided by the 6th Aust. Bn. were held by the 13th Res. Divn.

It was at this stage that the 1st Brigade took over the northern half of the divisional front. On its second night in the line, the intelligence officer of the 4th Battalion, an audacious youngster, Lieut. Taylor,⁴² coming back fresh from a reconnaissance, said that he had found himself looking along a trench containing about twenty Germans.

"Well," said Col. Sasse, who overheard this talk and probably judged it to be rather wild. "How about it, Taylor? Do you think you can take it on?" Taylor said he thought he could. The trench in question was the northern end of that forming the old German salient on Mont de Merris—when the salient was captured on June



3rd this part of the trench still ran on like a communication trench into the German lines. Accordingly at 9 next morning (June 12th) Taylor with six men crept out through the crop. After stationing one man to cover them, he and the other five cut the German wire and then leapt into the trench and found themselves, surely enough, among twenty or thirty of the enemy. A wild fight followed. The party having killed, as they estimated, about ten, tried to bring away two. But, seeing them to be so few, the Germans counter-attacked, bombing, and opening heavy fire. The prisoners were killed, but Taylor and his men, though hampered by slight wounds, got back, bringing

⁴²Lt. R. E. Taylor, M.C.; 4th Bn. Public servant; of Waverley, N.S.W., b. Madras, India, 13 June 1893.

a Bavarian cap and a shoulder strap marked with a "5." It was at once suspected that the 13th Reserve Division had been relieved by the 4th Bavarian.

This was true; that division had taken over the sector on the previous day. The 13th Res. Div. which a month before had come to Merris for a rest, "gladly," as the historian of the 13th R.I.R. remarks, "left the uncomfortable and costly position." "There was nothing but joy," says the history of the 39th R.I.R., when the relief took place; owing to their losses, six of its twelve companies had to be combined to form three. General Plumer's intelligence staff noted: "A fairly good Bavarian division has replaced an exhausted division in the Merris sector." The incoming division was commanded by Prince Franz of Bavaria, a brother of Crown Prince Rupprecht.

The stiffening of resistance experienced three weeks before, when the 13th Reserve Division took the place of the 12th Division, was now again remarked when the fresh troops came in. It happened, however, that, except at the old "communication trench" entered by Taylor north of Merris, where encounters were constant,⁴³ Australian activity was for the moment chiefly called for south of the railway against the 44th Reserve Division, whose main front was opposed to the 29th British. Here, on the edge of the flats at the southern foot of the ridge, the Australian line still required advancing, and this was carried out in a small operation, as follows:

At 1 a.m. on June 13 two companies of the 7th Bn., behind a barrage laid by artillery, trench-mortars, and machine-guns, pushed forward 500 yards on a front of 650 yards. As the objective, a line of shell-hole posts scattered across the fields, was reached, a machine-gun in one of them swept the platoon led by Lt. Edgoose,⁴⁴ hitting him and many of his men. The troops here were pinned down by its fire, but a corporal, J. F. Walters,⁴⁵ took charge and held on. Lt. Smedley⁴⁶ of the support

⁴³ A scout, Pte. L. S. McDougall (North Sydney), who had visited this trench with Lt. Taylor, several times afterwards guided Lt. J. H. Thomas (Hurlstone Park, N.S.W.) to it, and a raid was arranged in which Sgt. A. Grant (Annamdale, N.S.W.) was to crawl out to within a few yards of the trench and then give a signal on which several parties would rush it. At the time arranged the parties waited, but a shot was heard followed by several bomb explosions. No signal went up, and Thomas brought back his parties. Grant, trying to get very close to the trench, had been seen by the Germans, who wounded him before he could blow his whistle. Cpl. W. J. Pearce (Tallangatta, Vic.), who was with him, took the whistle, but he too, before he could use it, was wounded. The Germans had a very active commander here; after this attempt he had wire put out and dug a T-head trench.

⁴⁴ Lt. P. L. Edgoose, 7th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Box Hill, Vic.; b. Costerfield, Vic., 7 Aug. 1886.

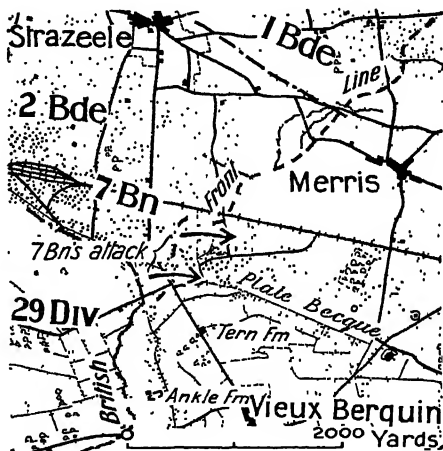
⁴⁵ Sgt. J. F. Walters, D.C.M. (No. 4619; 7th Bn.). Chauffeur; of Warrnambool, Vic.; b. Warrnambool, 1894.

⁴⁶ Lt. F. J. Smedley, M.C.; 7th Bn. Commercial traveller, of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Carlton, Vic., 25 Mar. 1876. Died of wounds, 20 Aug. 1918.

platoon, seeing the trouble, at once went forward with a number of his men, reinforced Walters' party so as to outflank the post, and then rushed it.⁴⁷ The Victorians in all lost 20 men, and they captured 47 prisoners of the II/205th R.I.R. (44th Res. Divn.)—mostly young and small men—together with nine machine-guns and a trench-mortar. They found that the German posts had been carefully roofed over and covered with sods, for the sake of concealment.

On the following night the 29th Division undertook a raid against Tern Farm and its tree-lined enclosure, 400 yards south of the Plate Becque on which the 1st Australian Division's flank rested. The 5th Battalion was asked to engage the German posts on the northern flank. Corpl. Chambers⁴⁸ accordingly took out three

men from the right flank post to find and raid a German post on the track near the channel (or ditch) of the Plate Becque. After advancing on either side of the road, but well away from it, for several hundred yards, and passing a barbed-wire fence, the Victorians ran into a large party of the enemy. There was some bombing



and Chambers withdrew his men, himself, after the practice of the A.I.F., retiring last to cover them. He was not seen again. The raiders of the 29th Division also were foiled by running into a large party with which they exchanged fire. Almost immediately afterwards a German bombardment descended on the front of the 29th Division and on that of the 2nd Australian Brigade, and, following it, parties of Germans counter-attacked the farms taken by the 29th on June 3rd. Immedi-

⁴⁷ Six Germans were killed there and 15 captured. It was Cpl. Walters who, with a private named Robins (St. Kilda, Vic.), bombed and captured the machine-gun under cover of fire by Pte. G. Roberts (Tatura, Vic.; killed in action, 9 Aug. 1918) from the flank.

⁴⁸ Cpl. E. M. Chambers (No. 373; 5th Bn.). Bookbinder; of Ascot Vale, Vic.; b. Ascot Vale, 17 July 1892. Killed in action, 14 June 1918.

ately to the north a counter-attack was also launched against the posts established on June 13th by the 7th Battalion and now held by the 5th. At one point two outposts, in one of which the Lewis gun had choked through becoming red hot,⁴⁹ fell back and two prisoners were taken by the Germans. The enemy then got through to a picket of Capt. Hastie's company, to be driven off leaving seven men and a machine-gun in the Australians' hands.⁵⁰ On the front of the 29th Division the Germans retook Lug and Ankle Farms, and also Fantasy Farm,⁵¹ but abandoned the latter the same day.

The attack on the 29th Divn. was made by storm parties of the 208th R.I.R., the regiment which had lost these positions on June 3. It had since been relieved by the 206th, but the attacking troops were brought up from rest at Sailly-sur-la-Lys and Douliou. Their enterprise was named "Panthersprung" and 17 British prisoners were taken.

On the Australian front it was the 205th R.I.R. that attacked. Some of its captured men said that, if the attack failed (as it did), it would be repeated by a battalion, since the ground was required by the Germans as the jumping-off position for an attack on Hazebrouck to be undertaken in a few days' time.

The Australian brigade commanders, called by General Walker to divisional headquarters, agreed that signs of an impending German offensive were accumulating, and it was decided to assume battle-stations on the night of the 15th. On the 15th Lieut.-General de Lisle of XV Corps visited the headquarters of his divisions to ensure that they were ready, and the order issued that it was most important to get more prisoners.

These came with unexpected suddenness. At 5.30 on the afternoon of the 15th Lieut. Maddox of the southern company of the 5th took out five men to search for Corpl. Chambers, who had been missed on the previous morning. Each member of the party took a revolver and bomb,⁵² and as they were going well into the enemy's territory each had stripped himself of anything by which his unit could be identified. They went along the track north of the Plate Becque and found the Ger-

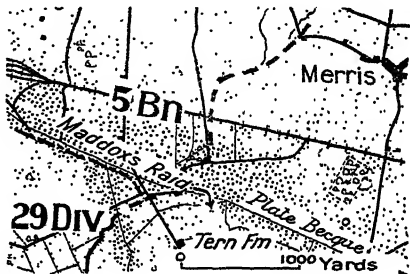
⁴⁹ It fired 13 successive magazines.

⁵⁰ The total capture is said to have been 9 prisoners (3 badly wounded) and 2 machine-guns.

⁵¹ Called by the Germans "Stachelhof." It had originally been occupied by the 8th Bn., A.I.F. on April 13.

⁵² One man also carried a rifle and bayonet.

man post, where Chambers was supposed to have been captured, to be empty. They then crossed the stream by a plank bridge and came on a fence newly strung with barbed-wire. Beyond it lay a crop of peas. At the fence Maddox left three of his men, and with the other two (Sergt. Lucas⁵³ and Pte. Merrin⁵⁴) had crept forward through the peas for sixty yards, when a shot was fired at them. They at once made a rush in the direction from which it came, and found themselves faced by three sentries stationed in posts, which, like those recently taken by the 7th, had been carefully roofed over and so well concealed that they could hardly be recognised even at that distance. As Maddox



charged he beckoned to his "supports"—the three Victorians in rear, who indeed were already running up.⁵⁵ The sentries at once surrendered, but the six Victorians found themselves in a nest of about eight posts, each holding two men. Had the Germans been alert the attackers could easily have been overwhelmed, but by threat of bomb and revolver they quietly emptied six of the posts, only one German, a sergeant, resisting. When his niche was reached he began calling for help, but was forced from his dugout by the boot of Pte. Merrin and the butt of Maddox's revolver. The party returned with twelve prisoners.⁵⁶

Meanwhile the 29th Division by counter-attack had won back its previous gains except at Lug Farm, which was not

⁵³ Sgt. A. H. G. Lukes, D.C.M. (served as No. 313, A.H.G. Lucas; 5th Bn.). Warehouseman; of Prahran, Vic.; b. St. Austell, Cornwall, Eng., 13 Nov. 1888. Died 29 Jan. 1934.

⁵⁴ L.-Cpl. A. M. Merrin, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 280; 5th Bn.). Painter; of South Melbourne, Vic.; b. Kilkenny, Ireland, 1893.

⁵⁵ They were Cpl. E. W. Jacobs, L.-Cpl. J. D. Jackson, and Pte. Shepherd. (Jacobs belonged to West Melbourne; Jackson to Melbourne.)

⁵⁶ Six of them were N.C.O.'s. The Australians were doubtless rather disgusted by the showing of these men, and on the long way back several revolver shots were fired near their heels, resulting in a wild race for the Australian lines—an incident which was considered amusing but certainly did not represent treatment that captured Australians would have appreciated at German hands.

retaken until the night of the 19th. The expected German attack did not come—indeed the Australian infantry, as usual, could not be persuaded of its imminence, since they could see no evidence of it. The minor attacks on the 29th Division's front, however, contributed to an important decision. For some time past it had been planned that the right of the Second Army together with the left of the First should carry out an extensive minor attack, advancing the line between Vieux Berquin and the neighbourhood of Merville to the Plate Becque, which here made a semi-circle southwards, in front of the British lines, and so offered a convenient objective. The date had been fixed, June 20th; the 29th Division was to make the assault in the Second Army's sector and the 5th Division in the First Army's. The enterprise was nicknamed "Borderland," and would be carried out under command of the XI Corps (First Army). But the 29th Division had been in the line with only a fortnight's rest since the difficult and costly fighting of the Lys offensive. Its infantry had for the past week been harassed by an inconvenient project for a cloud-gas attack, for which 4,000 cylinders had been installed in the support line, and the front line had to be nightly vacated waiting for a favourable wind.⁵⁷ On top of these factors the Spanish influenza, then raging,⁵⁸ and the fighting at the farms had so reduced the troops that, on the eve of the attack, it was decided to postpone it, and let the task be undertaken by a fresher division,⁵⁹ the 31st, by which the 29th was now relieved and to which it handed over the plans.

The 1st Australian Division continued—as it did for three months—its peaceful penetration and minor attacks. South of the railway at dawn on the 16th Lieut. Davis⁶⁰ of the 5th Battalion with three men, when trying to find a German trench newly dug there, ran into some of the enemy. In a *mêlée* three Germans were shot but Davis and two men were wounded. As

⁵⁷ The gas was finally discharged by daylight on June 17, quite uselessly (for the Germans could of course see its approach in ample time) but to every one's relief.

⁵⁸ This was not the severe form of pneumonic influenza, which supervened at the end of the summer, but a feverish disturbance, acute for a few days and then quickly passing.

⁵⁹ Since April 10 the 29th had lost in action 5,000 officers and men. It was now given a month's rest and received 6,500 reinforcements.

⁶⁰ Lt. H. S. Davis, 5th Bn. Farmer; of Yarram, Vic.; b. Sandy Bay, Tas., 1893. Killed in action, 16 June 1918.

Davis could not get back, one of his men, Pte. Bursill,⁶¹ stayed with him, but the neighbouring Germans, knowing his position, kept the ground under fire and, though many efforts were made to reach and bring the two back, all of them failed. Long afterwards it was realised that both were killed. On the 18th the 3rd Brigade having now taken over the sector, a party of the 9th Battalion seized and occupied a German post near this point, the garrison running away as the Queenslanders approached. Shortly after midnight on the following night (June 19th-20th) the ground desired on both sides of the railway was easily captured by a company of the 9th advancing under cover of a barrage. On the left the 11th Battalion also thrust forward two posts. During the advance south of the railway the Germans in the troublesome position there managed to stop for a time one platoon of the 9th, but another, crossing the railway from the ground gained north of it, came upon the enemy's position from flank and rear and captured it.

Concerning this small operation the historian of the 9th Bav. I.R., which lay north of the railway, says that the attacking force, estimated at two companies, came against the inner flanks of that regiment and of the 205th R.I.R. (44th Res. Div.), and wrongly claims that it was beaten off. (It is true, however, that afterwards two small parties of the 9th Bn. tried unsuccessfully to surround the next post to the south.) Apparently it was not until the following night that headquarters of the 9th Bav. I.R. was aware of the advance along the railway. The regiment lost 2 officers and about 40 men.

A few hours later, at 8.45, on the top of Merris ridge, where the 1st Brigade since taking over there had found the posts of the 4th Bavarian Division alert and difficult to approach⁶² and in the old "communication trench" trouble had been constant, an attack was made by part of Capt. Higinbotham's⁶³ company of the 3rd Battalion as follows:

⁶¹ Pte. L. G. Bursill (No. 5402; 5th Bn.). Labourer; of Maryborough, Vic.; b. Maryborough, 7 Apr. 1894. Killed in action, 16 June 1918.

⁶² On the night of June 17, Lt. C. L. Smith of the 3rd Bn. with three men, working down through the crops in a dip leading to the distant Meteren Becque north of Merris, did succeed in rushing a post, whose garrison (5th Bav. R.I.R.) ran. At 3 a.m. a German machine-gun opened from the flank, and a party of Germans from the post tried to retake the position but was driven off. Lt. A. D. Arnold (Glenorie, N.S.W.) and two men waylaid some Germans moving between their posts. Three appeared to be hit, but none was captured. Early on June 20, when the 9th Bn. advanced south of Merris, the 2nd Bn. also pushed forward two posts a mile north of the village; 9 men were hit in the German artillery barrage as the parties moved out.

⁶³ Capt. L. H. R. Higinbotham, 3rd Bn. Grazier; of Armidale, N.S.W.; b. Glebe Point, N.S.W., 27 Dec. 1889. Died of wounds, 21 June 1918.

While four Stokes mortars burst their shells on and beyond the ground to be attacked, Lt. McDonald⁶⁴ led his platoon against the "communication trench" from the north, and Lt. Taylor⁶⁵ a platoon from the south. The New South Welshmen had to get through wire and the German posts north and south of the trench opened with machine-guns. Men were hit in each party, Taylor being mortally wounded as he reached the trench, but the parties entered it as well as driving the Germans from two posts north of it, the enemy mostly running after firing a few shots. A barricade was at once built across the trench. The Bavarians almost immediately counter-attacked, but the barricade was held by four Australian bombers and the Germans made no headway.

Then, apparently because his men would not advance, a German leader in a cloth cap, who had been trying to put more vigour into the assault, climbed out upon the parapet at the side of the trench and advanced waving them on. As apparently his men still hesitated, he picked up a rifle and, with the Australians in the trench firing at him, coolly shot down one after another, at a few yards' range, three of the four New South Welshmen who were bowling bombs over the block. He then fell shot through the neck, and the spirit of his men failed. The barricade was held. At 3.30 in the afternoon, and again at 4.30 and 10.40 p.m., the Bavarians attacked, the last mentioned attempt being made by a company after a bombardment of the area. This time, when leading up reinforcements, Capt. Higinbotham was mortally hit, but the position was still retained. The Bavarians made a final, fifth, effort at sunset on the 22nd after forty-five minutes' bombardment of the place. Twice they came on, but each time were beaten off by the fire of Lewis guns and rifles.

The attack of June 20th cost the 3rd Battalion 38 casualties, and in the holding of the trench first and last the battalion is said to have lost 100 men.

The German regiment concerned here was the 5th Bav. I.R., but no account is given in its history even of the bravery of its leader at the barricade. Probably he was an N.C.O. and his magnificent effort may have been largely unperceived by his own side.

Meanwhile on the night of June 20th Coy. Sgt.-Maj. Kinchington and two men bombed the Germans out of a post on the ridge north of the "communication trench," but could not stay there owing to the fire of a machine-gun on the flank. Next night a party of the 11th under Lieut. Inman,⁶⁶ covered by a barrage, raided a farm at the bend of the Strazeele-Merris road west of Merris. A machine-gun had been firing there,

⁶⁴ Lt. C. J. McDonald, M.C.; 3rd Bn. Blacksmith's improver; of Bowral, N.S.W.; b. Bowral, 27 May 1895. Died of wounds, 19 Sep. 1918.

⁶⁵ Lt. F. W. Taylor, 3rd Bn. Bank accountant; of Turramurra, N.S.W.; b. North Sydney, 14 May 1894. Died of wounds, 22 June 1918.

⁶⁶ Lt. E. S. Inman, M.C.; 11th Bn. Grocer; of Fremantle, W. Aust.; b. Emerald, Vic., 12 Dec. 1893.

but L.-Corpl. Cross,⁶⁷ searching the house, found neither men nor gun. Inman with two men⁶⁸ then explored a sunken road farther on; it too was empty, but from there Inman saw the gun firing sixty yards farther away still. Determined to capture it, he went on but met three Germans of the 9th Bavarian I.R.—one he killed and the others he brought back;⁶⁹ the machine-gun lay under the bombardment of the Australian Stokes mortars, and so was unapproachable. The party set fire to the farm and was back with its prisoners within seventeen minutes of the start.⁷⁰

On the night of the 22nd, 480 gas projectors were fired by the engineers north of Merris; and on that of the 23rd, under cover of a barrage, Maj. Gilder's and Capt. Collingwood's⁷¹ companies of the 2nd Battalion, between Merris and the Becque, together with two companies of South Africans⁷² of the 9th Division on the other side of the stream, advanced the outpost-line 200-300 yards on a front of slightly over a mile. Some German posts in the centre of the advance held out until two of the platoons which were following the others as "moppers-up" seized them. The chief difficulty was met by some platoons of the 3rd Battalion advancing on the right flank. One of these (Lieut. Loveday's) came at an early stage under artillery fire and had every man except its sergeant hit. Lieut. Smith⁷³ rushed up his platoon to take its place, but he also had every man hit and was himself killed by a shell.⁷⁴ Their objective was eventually held by another platoon. The 2nd Battalion took 11 prisoners⁷⁵ and the South Africans 29. On the same night the 3rd Battalion south of the Strazeele road easily beat off an attempt twice made by the enemy to raid.

⁶⁷ L.-Cpl. W. J. Cross (No. 5084; 11th Bn.), Labourer; of Augusta, W. Aust.; b. Karridale, W. Aust., 7 Apr. 1889. Killed in action, 22 June 1918.

⁶⁸ Sgt. W. O. Reed and L.-Cpl. D. J. Emery. (Reed, who belonged to Coolgardie, W. Aust., died on 11 Sept. 1938. Emery belonged to Perth.)

⁶⁹ He had wounded one of these.

⁷⁰ So far it had no casualties, but the Germans now shelled the place heavily, killed 3, wounded 3 including Inman, and temporarily buried 3.

⁷¹ Maj. J. J. Collingwood, M.C., M.M.; 2nd Bn. Mine manager; of Inverell, N.S.W.; b. Camberwell, London, 13 Apr. 1882.

⁷² Now reduced to a battalion, though the brigade preserved its name.

⁷³ Lt. C. L. Smith, M.C.; 3rd Bn. Builder's labourer; of Newtown, N.S.W.; b. St. Peters, N.S.W., 24 July 1893. Killed in action, 24 June 1918.

⁷⁴ The 3rd Bn. lost 3 officers and 32 men, the 2nd 2 officers and about 30; the South Africans 2 and 26.

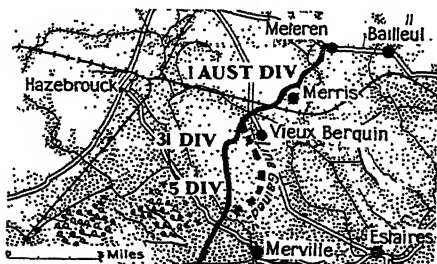
⁷⁵ Mostly of the 5th B.I.R. (4th Bav. Div.), but including 2 of the III/268th R.I.R. (81st Res. Div.).

From the history of the 5th Bav. I.R., which faced the 2nd Bn.'s attack, it appears that of the outposts in the forward zone of its right company (9th) only two men escaped. The left company (12th) immediately counter-attacked, and the battalion commander ordered an effort to be made from the main line of resistance of the right company, but the fire of "the numerous machine-guns brought up by the enemy" shattered the attempt. A substitute-officer with three sections of the 10th company then came up; the company had been on its way to relieve the 9th, when the bombardment heralding the attack fell suddenly and fairly upon it, killing its commander and eight men. The losses of the 9th were so heavy that its commander merely kept this reinforcement in the main line to secure that position.

This attack, says the history of the divisional cavalry, was "extremely costly" to the troops on whom it fell. The 5th B.I.R. had 143 casualties. The position of the front line afterwards was uncertain, and therefore the posts on June 27 put out newspapers and cloths which were photographed from the air.⁷⁶

The raid on the 3rd Bn. was made by the 9th B.I.R., whose history says that it failed through strong fire of rifle-grenades and machine-guns.

On June 28th—a warm summer day, cloudy and working up to a storm in the afternoon—the two British divisions on "Borderland" the right⁷⁷ carried out their "Borderland" attack, the most important undertaken by British—as distinct from dominion—troops during these months.⁷⁸ Practically the whole objective was reached, the 31st Division taking 254 prisoners and the 5th 165.⁷⁹ The 1st Australian Division was not supposed to have any part in this operation, but two days earlier it was asked to simulate an attack on Merris by laying down at the starting hour, 6 a.m., a barrage, partly of smoke,



⁷⁶ At this stage the Sixth German Army boundary was moved northwards; the two divisions in contact with the Australians—the 4th Bavarian and 44th Reserve—were transferred from III Bavarian Corps (Fourth Army) to XIX Corps (Sixth Army).

⁷⁷ The 31st was temporarily transferred to XI Corps, First Army.

⁷⁸ On June 14 the 3rd Brit. Div. also had attacked on the old Lys battlefield, between the River Lawe and La Panterie, advancing 450 yards on a front of 3,500 and capturing 200 prisoners and 20 machine-guns.

⁷⁹ Crown Prince Rupprecht's diary says that one German trench division—the 32nd—completely failed. The higher command then sent it to Lorraine.

along most of the divisional front and blowing horns and firing flare signals.⁸⁰ "There will be no set infantry action," said the order of the 3rd Brigade.

But the battalion then holding the line south-west of Merris, the 10th (South Australia), was commanded by Lieut.-Col. Wilder-Neligan, the same who as orderly-room sergeant had taken hold (with Maj. Salisbury) of the leaderless 9th Battalion at the Landing. Neligan, an adventurous young Englishman, born of well-to-do parents, favoured in peaceful life by every circumstance except his restless, reckless nature, had now, like many others, found his natural vocation in war. Transferred to command the 10th, he had within a few months infused into that battalion a special eagerness noted by all close observers. Now, to sit quietly by while a favouring barrage played on the Germans in front, was a rôle that he, though at the time suffering the onslaught of influenza, could hardly have tolerated. His brigadier, Gordon Bennett, was also a young front-line leader, who had taken grip of the troops around him at the Landing and in the Battle of Krithia. It was arranged that the front-line companies of the 10th should have fighting patrols ready for, at least, raiding.

Our artillery (wrote Neligan) at no stage is (to lay its barrage) less than 200 yards in front of our present front line. This is an opportunity for a few daring men. The detail and opportunity is left to the company commanders concerned.

But Neligan's company commanders well understood that if ground could be gained they were to gain it.

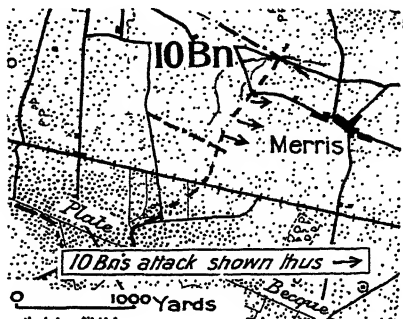
The 10th had two companies in line, the southern under Maj. Rumball, the northern under Lieut. Jenkins.⁸¹ From the centre of Rumball's front, when the barrage came down, Sergt. Leathley⁸² and four men with a Lewis gun crept through the crop to within twenty yards of a German post which, for the first five minutes, was being bombarded by rifle-grenadiers and Stokes mortars. When this bombardment lifted, three of the party, covered by a Lewis gun, rushed

⁸⁰ The barrage was to last till 6.20 and be repeated from 6.50 to 7.5.

⁸¹ Capt. W. R. Jenkins, 10th Bn. Bank accountant; of Norwood, S. Aust.; b. Semaphore, S. Aust., 18 Jan. 1892.

⁸² Sgt. T. C. Leathley, M.M. (No. 2187; 10th Bn.). Commercial traveller and decorator; of Henley Beach, S. Aust.; b. Garstang, Lancs, Eng., 6 Apr. 1879.

the post, capturing one German, and shooting two who were running away. The post was at the corner of a hedge, and the party going on took several more prisoners. As soon as news of this reached Rumball he ordered another platoon under Lieut. Bennett⁸³ to move forward and clear the hedge, which it did, taking 20 prisoners. Meanwhile farther south, on his own initiative, Lieut. Scudds⁸⁴ of the same company with one man, prowling forward to the edge of an adjoining field, had made five prisoners.



The German artillery fire had cut the telephone wires, but at 7 o'clock Rumball's runners brought Neligan news of these events and word that Rumball intended to advance his posts. The wires having now been repaired, Neligan directed that Jenkins's company should advance in conformity. A message shortly came back that it had tried to go forward but machine-gun fire was too heavy. Neligan then took the responsibility of sending it a definite order to advance. He put Rumball in charge of both forward companies, and directed Capt. McCann of the support company to send up two platoons to help him. At the same time he brought up the reserve company, Capt. Hurcombe's,⁸⁵ to the support position. The advance of the left company was carried out about 8 a.m. behind a smoke screen and barrage laid down by Stokes mortars and rifle-grenadiers, and not a man was hit. The troops of Rumball's left post—a platoon under Lieut. McInerney⁸⁶—who advanced about the same time, also reached without casualty the hedge

⁸³ Lt. W. S. Bennett, D.S.O., M.C.; 10th Bn. Life assurance official; of Kew, Vic., b. Balwyn, Vic., 30 Apr. 1879.

⁸⁴ Lt. H. W. Scudds, M.C.; 10th Bn. Motor mechanic; of Adelaide; b. Stirling East, S. Aust., 12 Aug. 1895.

⁸⁵ Maj. R. K. Hurcombe, M.C.; 10th Bn. Storeman; of Mile End, S. Aust.; b. Adelaide, 19 Aug. 1889.

⁸⁶ Lt. J. M. McInerney, 10th Bn. Secretary and dispenser, Mt. Gambier (S. Aust.) Public Hospital; b. Bendigo, Vic., 2 June 1888. Killed in action, 28 June 1918.

beyond which they were to dig in, but when digging began they were suddenly fired on by a machine-gun at close quarters. McInerney was killed, but survivors of the party took refuge in a ditch, where some of them decided to make a rush back to the Australian lines. In doing so a couple were captured by Germans who had got to the hedge behind them, but Corpl. Russell⁸⁷ held on. Another platoon digging near the hedge also was fired on by a machine-gun quietly brought up near by. A corporal, Phillip Davey,⁸⁸ crept out and, throwing some bombs into the hedge, put half the gun's crew out of action. Having used all his bombs, he went back to the old outpost-line for more, and then, creeping out again, killed the rest of the crew and captured the gun. Meanwhile at about noon Maj. Rumball, learning of the withdrawal of most of McInerney's men, led up the remnant together with a reserve platoon and re-established the post.

By this time, from numerous reports, Neligan realised that the new outpost-line was being dug close in front of a number of German posts. He decided to take these and, at a conference with the company commanders, arranged to do so at 6 o'clock under cover of a smoke barrage largely provided by the Stokes mortars and his own rifle-grenadiers firing smoke bombs. Through the artillery officer at his headquarters he arranged for the artillery to help. The barrage proved perfect. The front-line companies advanced in line of sections behind it; the Germans ran, and the Lewis gunners pushed ahead to fire at the retreating figures. The trench-mortars kept neighbouring enemy machine-gunners from shooting, and a smoke screen of ground flares and smoke grenades protected the troops from sniping as they dug in. The operation having been safely launched, Neligan handed over the conduct of the fight to Maj. Shaw and "went sick." After dark, food and supplies were brought up actually to the outposts by the transport drivers and their mules.

The 10th Battalion had captured 500 yards of the enemy's

⁸⁷ Cpl. S. H. Russell (No. 313; 10th Bn.). Miner; of Port Lincoln, S. Aust.; b. Port Lincoln, 1889.

⁸⁸ Cpl. P. Davey, V.C., M.M. (No. 1327; 10th Bn.). Horse driver; of Exeter, S. Aust.; b. Goodwood, S. Aust., 10 Oct. 1896.

front line and 35 prisoners with 6 machine-guns and 2 trench-mortars at a cost of about 50 casualties. On the following night in the small hours, McCann's and Hurcombe's companies having then taken over the new line, the Germans struck back. At one point, where a party of them were seen by a runner to be advancing between the posts, McCann with his messengers and signallers and reserve platoon advanced across the gap, and their opponents fled, throwing away rifles,⁸⁹ pistols, and ammunition, and leaving some dead of the 9th B.I.R. and a machine-gun. On the northern flank of the 10th a party of the enemy, approaching from a house on the Merris-Strazeele road, captured a trench forming the left of one of Hurcombe's outposts, but soon afterwards Hurcombe, coming on some of the men who had fallen back, attacked with them⁹⁰ and part of his reserve platoon. At their approach the Germans left the post and ran.

The commander of the 9th Bav. I.R., whose posts had been taken, appears to have been under the impression that his troops had beaten off a first attack at 6 a.m., but that a second thrust, about 8.30, had penetrated his two centre companies. The regiment lost 87 men, and could not (says its history) drive out the enemy.

There is indeed much evidence that by this time the 4th Bav. Divn. was losing its capacity for resistance, and that its staff was realising the fact. Like its predecessor, instead of quiet it had found in this sector extreme tension. "The whole terrain in and in front of the line was covered," says the historian of the 5th B.I.R., "with high crops which made it impossible to get any view from the posts and permitted an enterprising enemy to creep up to within a very short distance of the posts—and the British, New Zealanders (*sic*), who lay opposite the regiment here *were* enterprising. Regard for justice demands recognition of the fact that the enemy here was an unusually daring and enterprising soldiery which often pressed our front line heavily and 'grabbed' many a post from us. . . ."⁹¹ The weeks that the regiment spent in this sector were no light ones, and the regiment, which had performed so brilliantly in the attack on the Kemmel, learnt again here in

⁸⁹ Twelve rifles were picked up here and others in front of the post.

⁹⁰ Sgt. J. Mooney (Unley, S. Aust.; died 20 Nov. 1919) and two men, sent by Lt. G. S. Lightbody (Norwood, S. Aust.) also bombed the Germans.

⁹¹ The history of the division's cavalry (*3rd Bav. Chevaulegers Regt.*, by Col. Max Fels) also says: "The enemy here opposed to the division was—a sense of justice compels the admission—an exceptionally daring, tough, and enterprising soldiery." The history of the divisional artillery says: "The period 13-30 June is characterised by this feature, that the enemy was exceptionally active in infantry warfare, and almost daily patrol enterprises or attacks occurred, most of which brought to the enemy some gain of ground." The Bavarian field artillery was almost continually under the fire of its opponents' guns and had to withdraw its battery positions eastwards,

its own person the lesson that nothing exhausts the troops so much as having to defend a tactically unfavourably sited and imperfectly constructed position."

The same account says that air, gas, and artillery attacks were constant, and that the young German reinforcements showed the effect on their nerves, and often lost their heads in gas bombardments. They had always to be posted between two veterans, and even these may not always have been reliable—in fact, some prisoners contended that the recruits were better. The commander of the 9th B.I.R. on July 25th told his regiment that, while touring the line that morning, he

came across complete sections fast asleep, in spite of its being dawn and misty. These sections had removed their equipment and had not the faintest idea of the country, dispositions, their orders, or the troops on their flanks.⁹²

About the same time (according to prisoners) the divisional commander, Prince Franz of Bavaria, inspecting the I Battalion of that regiment, at rest in Fleurbaix,

talked to the men very seriously about the extraordinary state of things in the front line, and said the constant reports he received from regimental commanders of "English" raids and the nightly losses of prisoners were becoming a disgrace to the division.⁹³

At dusk on July 4th the 9th Bavarian I.R. tried to regain the ground lost by it on June 28th. At 9 a heavy bombardment descended on the whole front of the 1st Australian Division, and parties of Germans were presently seen advancing, but the defending fire of all arms, including rifle-grenades and Stokes mortars, was so prompt and intense that only at two points did the enemy reach the wire.

Papers afterwards taken from the dead showed that the 9th B.I.R. had attacked. The history of that regiment says that the assault (Würzburg) was made by "brave volunteers" forming four storming parties.

⁹² The quotation is from a captured order.

⁹³ Quoted from the Second British Army's intelligence summary, of July 2. The summary says that Prince Franz told the regiment that it should strengthen its defences, make more use of its rifles, and fire as soon as it saw a patrol advancing. According to prisoners, however, after the prince had gone, the men commented that it was very well to speak of strengthening their defences, but the constant fire of their opponents, who had observation over their positions, prevented this. The commander of the 9th Bav. I.R., in his order of July 25 quoted above, said that no advanced post must contain less than two, or preferably three, men. A third of the forward troops should be in the outpost-line, two-thirds in the main line of resistance. In each post all troops must keep watch by night, and at least one man by day.

The causes of failure are said to have been "too short artillery preparation, strong enemy artillery and machine-gun fire, and not least also the toughness of the enemy."

Still the front-line troops of the 1st Australian Division continued their depredations—a raid, two small formal advances, and a series of extraordinarily daring patrols.⁹⁴ On

⁹⁴ The following is a summary of the chief enterprises during these days:

June 29. A patrol went 300 yards into German territory north of Merris, but could not capture the German patrol that it was seeking. (Prince Franz had been urging that his division must itself undertake active patrolling, and one or two German patrols were seen about this time, sometimes in No-Man's Land, but on one occasion at least behind the German outpost-line.)

At 4.30 this afternoon Sgt. W. H. Sheppard (Ararat, Vic.) 8th Bn., crawled through the crop and located a German listening post half a mile north of Merris. He surprised the two men in it, but they would not return with him and were therefore shot. Another German post being alarmed, Sheppard had to return quickly. (He was killed on 9 August 1918.)

June 30. In the small hours the 8th Bn.'s posts north of Merris were advanced 200 yards, the enemy retiring before the Victorians, and only a little machine-gun fire being met with.

July 2. At 11.30 p.m. a party (3 officers and 40 others) of the 8th Bn. under Capt. G. T. Lovett (New Town, Hobart, Tas.) covered by artillery and trench-mortar barrage, raided in the same area. A number of Germans were shot, and 7 prisoners and 2 machine-guns of the 9th B.I.R. taken. As some difficulty occurred in bringing in the prisoners, they too were shot. (Lovett was killed on 1 August 1918.)

On the same night farther north near Le Waton, Lt. K. J. D. McKenzie (Broadford, Vic.) with 11 of the 7th Bn. twice visited a German post but found it empty.

July 3. In the afternoon Lt. W. L. Tucker (Huntly, Vic.) of the 7th with one man crept through the crop to a post near the one just mentioned. At 30 yards' distance he saw that it was manned by 12 Germans. These brought a machine-gun into action and wounded him, but his men pushed out a Lewis gun to cover him. Though he lay out till dark, the Germans made no attempt to capture him, and he was then able to get back. (Tucker died of his wounds on July 25.)

July 4. At 8.55 p.m. the Bavarians made their "Würzburg" attack, above described.

July 7. At 5.40 p.m. Lt. E. J. Archer (Annandale, N.S.W.), 6th Bn., with two men scouting north of Merris found a German post. They returned to get six other men and then stalked it. When they were within thirty yards, a machine-gun opened from it and bombs were thrown. In a brisk fight 9 Germans were killed or wounded, but 3 survivors fought on until another had been shot. The Victorians brought back the two prisoners and destroyed the machine-gun.

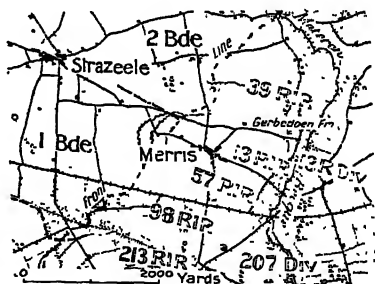
At 7.30 Lt. H. J. Southey (Kew, Vic.) and two men supported by a Lewis gun crept out along a ditch and entered the same trench to see if the Germans had re-manned it. Four Germans were found there; one was killed and three captured.

July 8. At 7 a.m. Capt. L. G. Campbell (Black Rock, Vic.) leading a patrol of four of the 6th Bn., accompanied by an American officer who was in the trenches for experience (Lt. Mitchell), crept towards a German post close to Taylor's "communication trench." They intended to surround the post, but before doing this were seen and at once decided to rush the Germans. The garrison fled but six were shot and the patrol brought back a light German machine-gun. The returning party was fired on from some neighbouring trees, and later the Germans could be seen bombing the empty post before they reoccupied it. Another patrol entered the "communication trench" but found the enemy here in strength and alert.

At 9 a.m. on the southern slope of the ridge, where the 1st Bde. had by then relieved the 3rd, Lt. W. J. Court (North Sydney) and four of the 4th Bn. crept out to capture a post which had been discovered on the previous night near a farm building 500 yards in front of the line. The post, when reached, at first seemed to be empty, but on looking closer they found a sergeant and private of the 9th Bav. I.R. whom they captured. These prisoners, in conversation with a pre-

the night of July 3rd the sound of much traffic and the unusual sight of two large German patrols south of the railway aroused the impression, which proved correct, that the 44th Reserve Division was being relieved; and on the night of the 9th a small advance at the junction of the 1st and 2nd Brigades on the northern outskirts of Merris (for these excursions were now approaching the village itself) met unexpected opposition, and of the 19 prisoners taken it was found that 8 belonged to the 13th Reserve Division. Some Bavarians captured the night before had—as is explained in the footnote—disclosed that the 4th Bavarian Division was about to be relieved. It was now discovered that the 13th Reserve was coming back to the sector that it had quitted a month before with such outspoken pleasure.

The 13th Res. Divn. had enjoyed a most satisfying rest for a month at Waerschote and Lembeke, but when that month ended, says the historian of the 39th R.I.R., "the direction of march was again towards Merris, to the familiar but unloved sector. . . . The situation had altered little, or rather had become still more troublesome—especially the activity of the infantry was still livelier." "The British," says the history of the 13th R.I.R., "daily increasing in strength⁹⁵ and apparently quite unharmed through our U-boats, had continually attacked our line and had forced it back several hundred yards up to the outskirts of Merris village." The division considered the holding of Merris to be the vital safeguard for itself and the flanking divisions. All forward posts were now to be at least four men strong, and machine-guns of the M.G.



tended German who was placed in the same room after their capture, let fall the information that their division was to be relieved on the following night.

July 9. At 11.30 p.m. the two flank companies of the 4th Bn. (1st Bde.) and 6th Bn. (2nd Bde.) attacked, covered by a barrage of artillery and light and medium trench-mortars. The barrage was good, but the Germans, who were found to be holding a number of small posts for some distance on both sides of the road to Gerbedoen Farm, fought stubbornly at certain points with machine-guns and bombs and had to be attacked from the rear before they were subdued. A party pursued them beyond the cross-roads north of Merris, but returned to dig in on the line laid down. Several German posts were taken one after the other, Lt. W. V. Diamond (Eagle Junction, Q'land) and Sgt. J. B. Maguire (Chiswick, N.S.W.) of the 4th Bn., attacking each from its flank. The advance of 200-300 yards incidentally secured the remainder of the old "communication trench," and resulted in the discovery of the return of the 13th Res. Div. to the line.

⁹⁵ Actually the 1st Aust. Div.'s infantry fell from 12,400 in April to 11,400 in June.

Sharpshooter Detachment were placed in the main line of resistance to cover gaps between them "and especially to defend the important village of Merris." The commander of the group of armies, Crown Prince Rupprecht, noted in his diary after the small Australian attack on the night of the 9th: "In this position we ought not to allow ourselves on any account to be driven back farther in view of our preparations for attack."

In the 1st Australian Division word was at once sent out that this German division was back again. Prisoners of the 57th R.I.R. said that the morale was not bad, but the division had been reinforced by many new drafts, and it remained to be seen how these would act. The Australian divisional intelligence summary pointed out that now was the time for exploiting the change of the garrison opposite. On the afternoon of July 10th two N.C.O.'s of the 6th Battalion, Sergt. Lockhart⁹⁶ and Corpl. Farrell,⁹⁷ creeping out through the crop entered an enemy trench just south of the Strazeele-Merris road. Moving along it they presently sighted a German post, which they proceeded to stalk. They had almost reached it when a German N.C.O. saw them and leapt towards his machine-gun. Before he could work it the two Victorians rushed the post and captured the whole garrison, eight men, whom they escorted back. This audacious exploit was completed by the bringing in later of two machine-guns from the position, a heavy one by the 6th Battalion and a light one by the 4th.⁹⁸

But it was next day that peaceful penetration found its climax. During July 10th the 1st Battalion, astride of the railway, had been informed by its brigadier
July 11 that it would shortly have to launch a raid. Its commander, Lieut.-Col. Stacy, also had told his companies⁹⁹ that he was dissatisfied with the number of patrols sent out nightly, and that "great opportunities" also existed by day when the enemy was "far from alert."

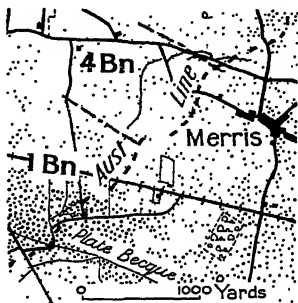
⁹⁶ Sgt. J. A. Lockhart (No. 4664; 6th Bn.). Clerk; of Golden Square, Vic.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 17 Mar. 1892. Killed in action, 23 Aug. 1918.

⁹⁷ Cpl. J. H. Farrell, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 2612; 6th Bn.). Butcher; of Garvoc, Vic.; b. Panmure, Vic., 28 Apr. 1889. Died 28 Sep. 1938.

⁹⁸ That night—another evidence of temporary German activity—a German patrol was seen west of Merris, and another enemy party brought up a machine-gun into No-Man's Land and opened with it. Four Australian Lewis guns were turned upon it, and a patrol going out found it abandoned and brought it in.

⁹⁹ Almost in the words used by Br.-Gen. Lesslie six weeks before.

Ahead of the left company of the 1st (Capt. Somerset), which had one post north of the railway and two south of it, there rose amid the crops, 250-300 yards away, two houses in hedged enclosures on either side of the railway. Somerset ordered that daylight patrols should be undertaken; and for his two northern posts these cottages and their hedges were the obvious centre of interest. The northern post and the cottage and field that faced it in the middle distance were both slightly north of the railway; but the centre post and the small enclosure south of the railway both bordered on the railway whose embankment, nine feet high, was fenced by a hedge and ditch that offered a good chance of passage eastwards or westwards for careful men. The centre post lay behind a slight rise which hid the enclosure from it, but the place could be watched from a shell-hole under the railway hedge, forward of the rise. Lieut. Gaskell,¹⁰⁰ whose platoon took over the post that night (July 10th-11th), was told by the outgoing commander that he thought the house south of the railway was occupied. At 3 a.m. Gaskell and Corpl. London¹ went out, as the dawn patrol, to the shell-hole and from there kept watch with field-glasses. They fired several rifle-grenades around the house, but neither they nor Sergt. Scott,² who with a companion relieved them at 5 o'clock, saw any movement near the house. Gaskell, however, was told by Lieut. Morley,³ commander of the platoon in the northern post, that Germans had run from the house when the grenades burst around it.



North of the railway Morley, who had a patrol⁴ out during

¹⁰⁰ Lt. G. E. Gaskell, M.C.; 1st Bn. Clerk; of Fitzroy, Vic.; b. Perth, W. Aust., 11 May 1895. (He had been in the Army Service Corps since 1914 and had only been commissioned and transferred to the infantry in June 1918.)

¹ Cpl. A. London, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 3380; 1st Bn.). Butcher; of Richmond, N.S.W.; b. The Slopes, N.S.W., 24 Dec. 1895.

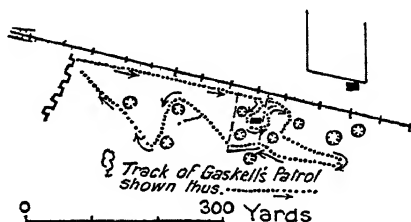
² Sgt. D. H. Scott, D.C.M., M.S.M. (No. 5086a; 1st Bn.). Shop assistant; of Cobar, N.S.W.; b. Bourke, N.S.W., 26 Sep. 1895.

³ Lt. C. R. Morley, 1st Bn. Industrial chemist; of Lindfield, N.S.W.; b. Darlinghurst, N.S.W., 7 Sep. 1889.

⁴ Sgt. N. H. Langford and two others.

the night vainly searching the railway and crop for some enemy post that could be raided, sent his early morning patrol—a sergeant, J. H. Coppin,⁵ and one man—along a ditch that led conveniently straight from his post to the northern enclosure. The cottage was at the south-eastern corner of this enclosure, and the two scouts observed puffs of smoke rising from above a wall there—apparently somebody was enjoying a pipe or cigar behind it. Both platoon commanders reported their observations to Somerset, and, as it seemed that both areas contained Germans, he ordered Morley and Gaskell to go out again with patrols and search the hedges and shell-holes there.

The day was cloudy, with rain threatening. Each platoon commander took very few men. Gaskell, who got away first, chose Sergt. Scott and Corpl. London, who had already been patrolling, and one other man. Each carried a rifle, several bandoliers of ammunition, and four bombs, and Gaskell and Scott also had revolvers.



They went along the ditch,⁶ well hidden from the north by the embankment and by the high crop, which grew right up to the ditch, from the south. On reaching the corner of the enclosure, they saw that it was covered only with grass, in the middle of which, on the eastern side, stood the house. Gaskell and the corporal crept along the railway ditch to a point north of the house, and then lay covering the enclosure with their rifles, while the sergeant and private crept southwards around the outside of the hedge, making a full tour of it until they came to the back of the house. They then entered the building. It had been lately lived in—some playing cards had been left there but nothing by which the occupants could be identified.

Gaskell, while waiting, could see some very large shell-holes in the crop a little east of the enclosure. These might

⁵ Sgt. J. H. Coppin, M.M. (No. 1408; 1st Bn.). Government employee; of Sydney; b. Geraldine, Canterbury, N.Z., 1893. Died of wounds, 23 Aug 1918.

⁶ The ditch was on the southern side of the railway hedge.

contain Germans. He accordingly sent Sergt. Scott to clear them; Scott had to crawl across an open space behind the house, but he reached them and found that they had never been occupied.

If, therefore, Germans were in the area, they must be between the enclosure and the Australian lines. Accordingly the whole party—in the “diamond formation”⁷ used by most small patrols in this fighting—crawled across the grass to the south-western corner of the field, and lay here behind the hedge, Gaskell searching through his field-glasses for any sign of the enemy to the west and Scott similarly searching to the south. Rather more than 100 yards to the west Gaskell saw the rim of a shell-crater on which new earth seemed to have been thrown, and two other craters some distance beyond. The party accordingly crawled to within thirty yards of the nearest crater—by cautiously raising his head now and then above the crop Gaskell could steer straight for it. He was now certain that the crater was occupied—the proof being that the crop had been used as a latrine. He was equally sure of the second, another hundred yards on, since green crop had been strewn on its rim to camouflage it. The corporal and private were accordingly left as a covering party, chiefly to guard the rear, while Gaskell and Scott crawled to the rim of the first crater so quietly that both put their heads over it before they were seen.

It was a machine-gun post, and in it with a revolver strapped to his waist was a German, evidently supposed to be on guard, but actually squatting down, talking to another man who lay on the bottom of the shell-hole. Gaskell and Scott pointed their revolvers at the Germans who both scrambled to their feet, holding their hands up and calling “Mercy.” The Australians with threats made them keep quiet and Gaskell then asked where the other posts lay. They pointed to the third shell-hole, of which he was till then doubtful, 100 yards to the south-west. The prisoners, who were very willing to obey as soon as they understood what Gaskell wanted, were told to pick up their machine-gun and accompany the two Aus-

⁷ The four members were stationed at the points of the diamond, the commander usually associated with the leading scout the other two men moving in support.

tralians back to the covering party—London and the private. Here they were left while Gaskell and Scott undertook the hazardous task of stalking the other two craters. They first, together, approached the southern one. Four Germans were in it with a machine-gun, and they had probably heard some noise, for they were alert and, when rushed, fired several shots; but the two Australians also used their revolvers, and the Germans gave in.

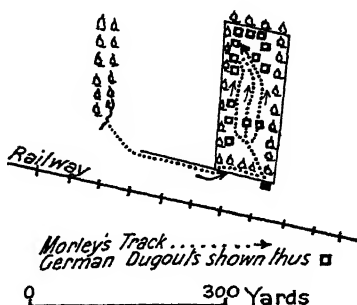
Gaskell could now see men moving in the third crater, evidently wakened by the shots and preparing to defend their post. Accordingly, leaving Scott with the new prisoners, he went on at once, alone. He came on the post so quickly that its garrison was not ready, and though they were eight, including a company sergeant-major, with a machine-gun, and they fired at him, he wounded several (including the leader, hit through the wrist) and they then surrendered. On each occasion the Australians by throwing a bomb could have shattered the whole garrison, but a single bomb explosion would have awakened every German within hearing, whereas a few revolver shots would not. These Germans were hurriedly disarmed, and then the whole number, carrying their three machine-guns, made straight over the top to Gaskell's post in the Australian line. Germans in some houses 250 yards to the south fired at them without hitting any. Apparently others nearer, in the crop, slept on.

When the fourteen prisoners reached him, Capt. Somerset ordered that all shell-holes in the neighbourhood of the three raided machine-gun posts should be cleared. Accordingly the patrol⁸ searched through the crop all the shell-holes near the three just raided. The sentries had been captured and there was now less need for care. The shell-holes were generally approached from the front, and many were found to contain the sleeping quarters of one or two men—usually a hole let into the forward side of the crater and covered over with a waterproof sheet. Some of these shelters were difficult to detect even when the searcher was standing over the crater. Eighteen more Germans were pulled from them, the only opposition

⁸ Two of its members had been sent back with the prisoners. Two men were now taken out instead of them.

coming in the form of shots fired from houses 200 yards to the south, by which one Australian was hit.

Gaskell's patrol had within three and a half hours cleared the German front for 250 yards south of the railway, taking 32 prisoners and 3 machine-guns. On the other side of the line Morley had an even more spectacular success. He, also, took out with him the earlier patrol and one other man,⁹ and, creeping along the ditch and hedge to the south-western corner of the large enclosure, left one man there to keep watch while the others went on and surrounded and searched the house. This too was found empty. The field which stretched north of them, however, they knew to be occupied. Morley had now called in the man that kept watch and all four crept cautiously across the grass of the field towards its western hedge. Near the hedge they saw a dugout, and one of the party reaching its opening had the occupants covered with his revolver before they saw him or could give the alarm. Two more dugouts were quietly seized in the same way. The prisoners, being an embarrassment, were quickly sent off in charge of the N.C.O.

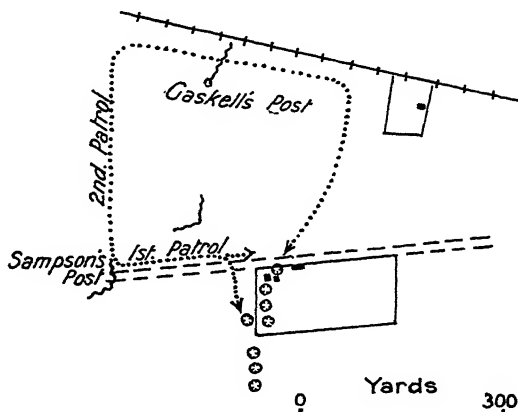


Morley and the two others then worked northwards up the field, the officer in the centre and his companions a dozen yards on either side. This enabled them to capture three more dugouts simultaneously. So far the patrol was noiseless, but at two more dugouts at the northern end of the field some of the occupants tried to defend themselves and several shots had to be fired. This aroused men in other shelters and Morley had to act instantly. The patrol threw bombs into the north-western corner of the field, where most of the enemy were, and closed in, cutting off the Germans' retreat. Unnerved by the

⁹ The patrol included a youngster, Pte. A. E. Rostron, whose grandfather, Pte. Duncan Allan (born in Glasgow in 1851) also served in the Australian infantry in France. (Both belonged to Lawson, N.S.W. Rostron was killed in action on 18 Sep. 1918; Allan died on 21 Dec. 1930.)

bombs the enemy surrendered. Twenty-five had now been captured in the field. Subsequently Corpl. Wood¹⁰ and two men captured eleven more—in all thirty-six prisoners and four light machine-guns were taken from the field and safely brought in.

Two small patrols of Somerset's company¹¹ had thus captured the whole garrison of the German front line opposing them—68 men and 7 machine-guns. One Australian had been wounded. It was decided to advance the company's line; Corpl. London and one man went out to guard for the time being the ground cleared by Gaskell, and three Lewis guns were sent there in the afternoon. But before the out-posts could be safely advanced, the German posts on either flank of the cap-



tured ones would have to be taken. This was ordered. Meanwhile word had gone out that the 1st Battalion was overrunning the German front, and other battalions were eager, and were spurred to do the same. The position now most necessary to seize was the farm 200 yards south of the posts raided by Gaskell, and from which his party had been sniped. This farm lay opposite the left platoon post of the southern company of the 1st Battalion, Capt. MacGregor's.¹² It had been intended to raid this farm—Lieut. Sampson, the platoon commander, had been out there during the night and had seen some of the enemy

¹⁰ Sgt. G. F. Wood, M.M. (No. 5256; 1st Bn.). Clerk; of Rockdale, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 1894.

¹¹ In addition to those mentioned by name, Cpl. R. Cooney (Kensington, Vic.) and Pte. S. Ayoub (Coonamble, N.S.W.) were prominent in these actions.

¹² Capt. R. I. C. MacGregor, M.C.; 1st Bn. Farmer; of Boree Creek, N.S.W.; b. Mussoorie, India, 22 July 1892.

there. At 10 a.m., before any order arrived to seize the place, Sampson took a patrol of four men to examine it. They crept up a ditch to within forty yards and then, spreading out at five yards' intervals, approached the farm hedge. As no shots were fired at them Sampson sent Corpl. Leighton¹³ and two men to see if a long hedge south of the farm was wired, while he and Corpl. Villiers¹⁴ examined the precincts. This was being done when Sampson and Villiers heard shots in Leighton's direction. They hurried towards the sound to find Leighton's party with seven prisoners returning to the Australian line under fire from a German post 100 yards farther south. Sampson and Villiers covered their comrades' retirement.

By this time news of the peaceful penetration near the railway was coming in; and with the decision to advance the outpost-line came the necessity for clearing all other German posts near the farm raided by Sampson's party. He was ordered to do this by making a long détour with his platoon through the farm captured by Gaskell, and descending from there upon the rear of the Germans near the southern farm. This he did, posting two Lewis guns to cover him if necessary, and advancing very quietly in two lines.¹⁵ He thus arrived within thirty yards of two German posts, south of the farm he had visited in the morning, before they saw him. The Germans then opened with rifles and machine-guns, but Sampson's platoon at once charged, killing several Germans, and capturing 9 as well as 2 light machine-guns. In trying to advance farther his southern flank was heavily fired on, 4 men being hit. He therefore placed a post south-east of the farm and from this patrols of three or four men afterwards worked southwards behind the next German posts and captured three of them.

Fire from farther south was still worrying this flank. A patrol of four men under Lieut. Mitchell,¹⁶ sent out before sunset to advance the next post on the right, found itself under

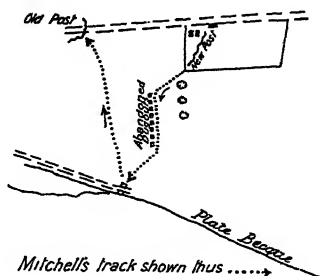
¹³ Cpl. A. D. Leighton, D.C.M. (No. 6590; 1st Bn.). School teacher; of Rylstone, N.S.W.; b. Yelma, N.S.W., 27 Sep. 1895. Died of wounds, 11 July 1918.

¹⁴ Cpl. A. E. Villiers (No. 1469; 1st Bn.). Commercial traveller; of Double Bay, N.S.W.; b. Hawthorn, Vic., 1 Nov. 1895.

¹⁵ The second line, under Sgt. G. Abraham (Sydney; died 11 Oct. 1937), was to watch the flanks, especially the left, and to reinforce if necessary.

¹⁶ Lt. S. O. Mitchell, 1st Bn. Clerk; of Kogarah, N.S.W.; b. Carlton, N.S.W., 23 Aug. 1897.

this fire and was ordered by Capt. MacGregor to clear these Germans if possible. After a long and cautious approach from Sampson's new position, it reached without causing alarm two German posts on either side of the track along the Plate Becque.¹⁷ In order to surprise the garrison it had to attack both posts at once. The sentry in the nearer one, sitting in his trench, was shot at the same time as a bomb was exploded in the farther post. The Germans there fought, and a hostile party also approached cautiously through the crop farther down the Becque, and could not be stopped by shots fired by the patrol, which was also bombing the posts. Fortunately the Germans in the twin posts, 14 in all, surrendered in time to be hurried away by the five Australians before the approaching enemy attempted to attack.¹⁸ Nine Germans were believed to have been killed in the posts and three wounded. The German supports were presently seen jumping into the empty posts.



The two southern platoon commanders of MacGregor's company found that the enemy posts ahead of them near the Plate Becque were most difficult to outflank, although Sergt. Baylie¹⁹ tried three times to effect this. Lieut. Laracy²⁰ and two men of the southernmost Australian platoon eventually brought in two Germans from south of the Becque after shooting several. MacGregor's company had in all one man killed and three wounded.²¹

¹⁷ Here the Germans had cut the crop for 40-80 yards in front of the posts.

¹⁸ Nor did this party fire as the prisoners were being taken away.

¹⁹ Sgt. W. H. Baylie (No. 7A; 1st Bn.). Farm labourer; of Ulmarra, N.S.W.; b. London, Eng., 18 May 1894. Died 27 Sep. 1919.

²⁰ Lt. F. P. Laracy, M.C.; 1st Bn. Chemist's assistant; of Toowoomba, Q'land; b. Toowoomba, 1891. Lost in s.s. *Leinster*, which was torpedoed in the Irish Sea, 10 Oct. 1918.

²¹ Among those who were prominent in this company's operations were Sgt. G. S. McInnes, L.-Cpl. C. J. Gilchrist, and Pte. W. F. Eagles (with Lt. Sampson); Sgt. L. Wilkins (with Lt. Mitchell); L.-Cpl. A. J. Bruce (with Lt. Laracy, on July 11 and 12); and Sgt. R. H. Hart and Pte. H. H. Kempe. (McInnes, who died on 11 Sep. 1936, belonged to Jones Island, Manning River, N.S.W.; Gilchrist to Orange, N.S.W.; Eagles, killed 12 July 1918, to Albury, N.S.W.; Wilkins to Blenheim, N.Z., and Redfern, N.S.W.; Bruce to Wanganella, N.S.W.; Hart, killed 23 Aug. 1918, to Collie, W. Aust.; and Kempe to Cessnock, N.S.W.)

North of the 1st Battalion the outposts of the 4th Battalion had watched with elation the prisoners constantly trickling back from the 1st Battalion's excursions. On the previous night it had been arranged that a patrol of the 4th should go out at 9 this morning to examine a hedge in front of the battalion's right. It brought in 3 prisoners. A second patrol then searched the area between this hedge and the next post, and another (2 N.C.O's and 4 men) working from the second post captured 7 Germans and a machine-gun. L.-Corpl. Hedley²² and two men moved thence to a post 75 yards northward; the eight Germans in it were ready for them, but on Hedley's beginning to pull the pin from a bomb they put up their hands.

About 3.30 p.m. (wrote Sgt. Langford,²³ 1st Bn.) the men were walking about the open and so far not a shot was fired at us. . . . The sun was shining brightly, and not even the sound of a shell.

About that time, however, the Germans in Merris, on the crest to the left, began to be generally aware of what was occurring and in that neighbourhood movement about the crops became difficult. Patrols sent out by the left of the 4th were quickly seen and fired on, but late in the afternoon a small patrol of the left company brought in three more prisoners.²⁴

North of Merris the 2nd Brigade also was active. Lieut. Robertson²⁵ of the 5th Battalion with three men going out at 11 a.m. opposite le Waton surprised two sleeping Germans. But their terrified cries aroused all the neighbouring posts, so that they had to be shot and the patrol got back with difficulty.²⁶ The Germans on this brigade's front were alert and, despite many efforts, no other prisoners were made.

But the outposts of the 1st Brigade had by their own enterprise captured over 1,000 yards of the 13th Reserve Division's line with 120 prisoners, including 3 officers, and 11 machine-

²² L.-Cpl. R. Hedley, M.M. (No. 2613; 4th Bn.). Sheep overseer; of Coonamble, N.S.W.; b. Chesters, Roxburghshire, Scotland. 5 Jan. 1889.

²³ Sgt. N. H. Langford (No. 3092; 1st Bn.). Photo. engraver; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. Neutral Bay, N.S.W., 9 Sep. 1894.

²⁴ Capt. A. S. Allen was mortally wounded by machine-gun fire after the patroling, in which he was active, ended.

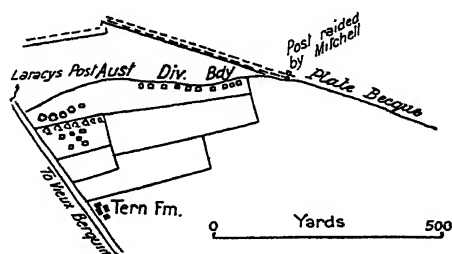
²⁵ Lt. D. Robertson, 5th Bn. Teamster; of Horsham, Vic.; b. Glasgow, Scotland, 7 Apr. 1888.

²⁶ It brought one of their shoulder straps showing them to belong to the 39th R.I.R.

guns. The supporting artillery had to suspend its fire during the day because (as the war diary of the XV Corps heavy artillery states) "no one knew where they (the Australian infantry) had gone on their marauding expeditions."²⁷

Except on the extreme right the posts that had made the raids were advanced and dug in during the night. On the right the process continued next day. In the morning, during a fall of rain, Lieut. Laracy with five men entered a field across the Vieux Berquin road on the 31st Division's front, and, working in the same way as the patrols of the previous day, cleared it of 28 Germans (of a fresh division, the 207th) and 4 machine-guns. It happened

that, when this news arrived, the commander of the British battalion holding that sector, the 11th East Yorkshire, was visiting Col. Stacy to discuss an intended attack upon Tern Farm,



a quarter of a mile south of the Becque. Stacy suggested that the East Yorks should endeavour to capture Tern Farm at once, while the 1st Battalion pushed forward its right north of it. This was agreed, and in due course the southern platoons of the 1st tried to outflank the German posts on and south of the Plate Becque. They shot a number of Germans and Laracy captured 7 more, but the twin post reoccupied by the German supports after Mitchell's raid and two others south of it gave much difficulty. An N.C.O. and one man were sent to get round the latter, and one of the garrisons was in the act of surrendering to them, when the German officer in the other post called on the men to fight. On this occasion no covering or supporting party was at hand to open fire or run forward at the nick of time, giving the appearance of reinforcements. The Germans fired, killing the private and wounding the

²⁷ The history of the 36th H.A.G. (Australian Siege Brigade), which was firing over the Australians on June 21, contains a somewhat similar note. The 2nd Australian Siege Battery formed part of the brigade.

N.C.O., who managed to get back although the German officer and two men tried to cut him off.

However, the Australian posts on the right were advanced, though not so far as was intended;²⁸ 35 more prisoners had been captured this day, at higher cost to the battalion than those of the day before—2 Australians being killed and 6 wounded. The 31st Division seized Tern Farm, and during the day captured 58 prisoners.²⁹

Of the 155 prisoners, 1 officer and 50 men belonged to the 57th R.I.R. (13th Res. Divn.) lying between Merris and the railway, and 2 officers and 90 men taken south of the railway belonged to the newly arrived 207th Divn.³⁰ Some prisoners said that the patrols were helped by British contact aeroplanes which fired at the posts and made the garrisons keep low.

The history of the 57th R.I.R. has not been written, but that of its sister regiment, the 39th R.I.R., says: "Seeing that opposite us lay an Australian division with 21 (*sic*) battalions, it was no work of art with constantly fresh forces to operate against the 9 battalions of our division greatly diminished in fighting strength as they were." (Actually, with its 12 battalions, the 1st Aust. Divn. held a considerably longer line than the 13th Res., and had been for three months unrelieved. Its outposts were about the same strength as the German ones, but disposed by platoons and not scattered.)

Of the peaceful penetration in the 207th Divn.'s sector, the history of one of its regiments (209th R.I.R.) says that on the night of July 11 "the enemy tried his luck in the sector of the 98th R.I.R. on the railway south of Merris" and about 2 p.m. next day "he succeeded, without our front line battalion observing it at the time, in forcing his way in fair strength into the north part of Vieux Berquin. . . and taking prisoners the 5th and 6th companies of the 213th and parts of the 8th." A man of the 98th, captured a week later, said that a battalion commander had been dismissed as the result of these incidents and for saying that his battalion was too tired to return to the line.

Continuance of such collapse would have meant the end of local resistance, and it is no wonder that the Australian patrols for a few days afterwards found the German posts keenly alert, their machine-guns chattering, some firing indirect and others sweeping No-Man's Land whether patrols were there or

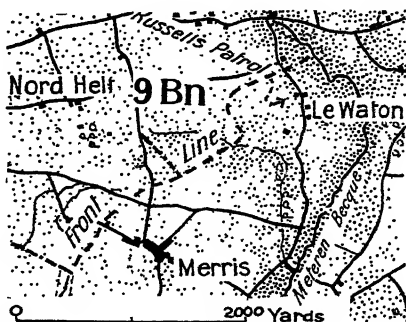
**Second
Meteren**

²⁸ Those south of the Plate Becque were handed over to the 31st Div.

²⁹ In the Meteren sector also the 9th Div. carried out three raids and captured 7 prisoners.

³⁰ Two officers and 60 men belonged to the 98th R.I.R., and 30 men to the 213th R.I.R.

not.³¹ It is true that on the night of July 12th the 6th Battalion under a light barrage advanced some of its posts north of Merris and next day south of the village two men of the 2nd brought in two Germans. That night far out near "Celery Copse" Sergt. Delaney³² of the 3rd with a dozen men waylaid and suddenly blazed into a company of Germans, causing a number of casualties, but had to withdraw on the approach of another. But elsewhere patrol after patrol found itself resisted when previously the Germans would have been surprised. The enemy was now putting larger garrisons in his advanced posts, and seemed to



have brought forward part of his previous supports. It was not until July 16th that patrols of the 3rd Brigade, which had now relieved the 2nd north of Merris, were able to get through the German posts near the Meteren Becque at Le Waton and renew their prowlings behind them. Here a young officer of the 9th, Lt. Russell³³ having previously found a German post empty by day, decided to ambush the garrison coming to man it by night. After dark on July 16th he lay with his patrol for an hour and a half across the track leading to it, but no enemy appeared, and he was just searching the trench before returning, when the Germans came along the track behind him. Russell, who had sent Sergt. Preston³⁴ and two men to try and

³¹ This day Germans were seen moving in front of a post of the 1st Bn. when Chaplain G. Prickett (Stockport, Eng.) happened to arrive. Believing that the Germans were hungry and would surrender, the chaplain (with Pte. E. Francis and another) walked out towards them with food, but was quickly driven back by machine-gun fire.

³² Sgt. W. Delaney (No. 1317; 3rd Bn.). Labourer; of Lithgow, N.S.W.; b. Bathurst, N.S.W., 26 July 1893.

³³ Lt. S. H. E. Russell, M.M.; 9th Bn. Farmer; of Alstonville, N.S.W.; b. Standish, Gloucestershire, Eng., 9 Mar. 1896. Killed in action, 20 July 1918. (Son of Reuter's war correspondent, H. W.—later Sir Herbert—Russell, and grandson of the novelist, Clark Russell. He was one of the many splendid youngsters who emigrated to Australia in the years before the war, and had been working on a farm on the north coast of N. S. Wales.)

³⁴ Sgt. H. Preston (No. 2871; 9th Bn.). Farmer; of Ulmarra, N.S.W.; b. St. Albans, N.S.W., 6 Apr. 1896.

locate the Germans, thought these were his scouts returning, and called to Preston. The reply came in German, so the patrol opened with rifles and bombs. The Germans at once called out "Australia," evidently hoping to pass for an Australian patrol. In a *mêlée* several of them were hit. A patrol searched the area next day and found a dead guide of the 39th R.I.R.³⁵ Russell explored the whole area again by daylight on the 18th and brought in many papers. The Germans in a neighbouring post watched his patrol with curiosity but did not fire, and the party walked back across the open.³⁶

Word had reached the 1st Division that the long envisaged attack on Meteren would be made by the 9th Division on the morning of July 19th.³⁷ As in the "Borderland" attack the 1st Division was to undertake no important action on its front; indeed, this time its available artillery, trench-mortars, and machine-guns would be helping to cover the 9th Division, and there would not even be a diverting barrage on the Australian front.

At this stage Second Army intelligence staff had information from prisoners that final preparations were being made by Crown Prince Rupprecht's forces to attack the Ypres-Kemmel-Hazebrouck front. A German officer taken near Dickebusch on the 14th³⁸ was tricked into revealing that for two days his company had been bringing up the trench-mortar ammunition for it. Incidentally it was noted that the Germans had built across Meteren Becque many bridges large enough to take vehicles, and that whenever one was destroyed it was immediately repaired. It so chanced also that on the Second Army's side, in order to keep the 1st Australian Division continuously in the line, one of its two forward brigades had again been drawn back into support on July 14th, an attached brigade (87th) of the 29th Division taking over the southern quarter of the front at the railway, while the 3rd Brigade with two

³⁵ The patrol brought back one of his shoulder straps; another patrol, unaware of this, brought back the other one.

³⁶ Later on the same day Lt. T. J. Sheedy (Nambour, Q'land) of the 9th Bn. and three men made an even longer journey through the same area, but found no Germans.

³⁷ This was the third of Second Army's minor offensives. On July 14 British troops had attacked at Ridge Wood in the Dickebusch sector and taken their objective and 258 prisoners.

³⁸ In the attack mentioned in the previous footnote.

battalions in line extended over the northern three-quarters of it.³⁹ As the impending German attack was said to have been fixed for July 18th or 20th, the 2nd Brigade, in rest, was put upon two hours' notice to move. Meanwhile the 1st Australian and 3rd Divisions were, if possible, to secure some prisoners at the time of the 9th Division's attack on Meteren.

The patrols of Russell and others determined Brig.-Genl. Bennett of the 3rd Brigade and Lieut.-Col. Mullen of the 9th Battalion to try something much more important than this order implied. If the 9th Division's attack went well, the Queenslanders with their left protected might by peaceful penetration get a platoon behind the German posts near the Meteren Becque, and, if this succeeded, the platoon could work south-westwards behind the German front, co-operating as it proceeded with other platoons which would attack in flank and front or "mop-up." For this operation a company in the support line under Lieut. Salisbury⁴⁰ was detailed, but the platoons in outpost near the Becque would help the break-through, and, when once the ground had been won, all the outposts would advance and dig in.

The 9th Division attacked at 7.55, and at 8.15, seeing that it was progressing well, Salisbury's platoons advanced, each in the form of patrols. The first, which was to break through, moved through the crops in four patrols, but when 150 yards out was stopped by fire from a post in the hedges to its left, between le Waton and the Becque. The patrols began to work west of this post, through ruined cottages; but meanwhile the two Australian outposts nearest to the Becque had advanced, the left platoon (Lieut. Knowles)⁴¹ working astride the Becque with the South Africans, and the next (Lieut. Hamilton)⁴² advancing along hedges and through the wheat until stopped by the same machine-gun post that held the penetrating platoon. A Lewis gunner,

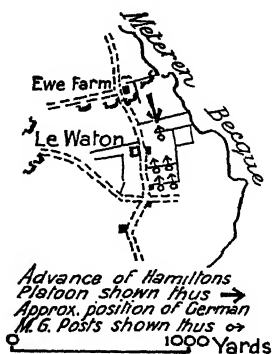
³⁹ The 3rd Bde. now had a front of about 3,300 yards, facing two German regiments and part of a third.

⁴⁰ Lt. R. B. Salisbury, M.C.; 9th Bn. Salesman; of Sandgate, Q'land; b. Lilley, Q'land, 15 Sep. 1891.

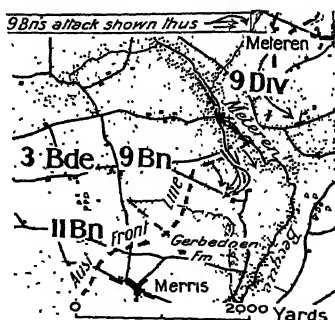
⁴¹ Lt. H. N. Knowles, M.C.; 9th Bn. General merchant; of Brisbane; b. Clayfield, Q'land, 8 Sep. 1892.

⁴² Lt. R. G. Hamilton, M.C.; 9th Bn. Grazier; of Moura Station, Dawson district, Q'land; b. Dalby, Q'land, 8 Apr. 1890. Died 27 May 1927.

L.-Corpl. Young,⁴³ worked from shell-hole to shell-hole round its eastern flank and, when thirty yards away, charged at it firing his gun from the hip, killed the crew, and captured the gun. Two guns in a farther hedge next stopped the platoon's advance, but Young took these under fire from a flank and the platoon charged and captured guns and crews. This platoon had then reached its objective, but another machine-gun beyond had to be rushed by some men under cover of two Lewis guns and bombers before the outposts could dig in.



This fine advance made the opening for the penetrating platoon. After chasing some of the fleeing enemy until these dropped into their distant support trenches, the platoon mopped up le Waton and Salisbury's second platoon arrived and swung south-westwards, advancing along the Germans' front while the first platoon moved along their rear. Presently a check was caused by a post at a cross-track, but, while the Lewis gunners fired above the crops from the hip, or with guns rested on their comrades' shoulders, the bombers crept closer. Some of the German garrison then gave signals of surrender, others threw bombs, but wildly, and the Queenslanders rushed the post without a casualty. Here Salisbury's third platoon came up and joined in the advance on a large post 200 yards farther along the line. Adopting the same methods the three platoons gradually closed in, and, when the one in rear came near enough to bomb, this post also was rushed and the garrison captured. The outposts of



⁴³ Cpl. J. E. Bartle, D.C.M., M.M. (served as No. 2924, J. E. Young; 9th Bn.). Axeman; of Tambourine Mountain, Q'land; b. Mackay, Q'land, 13 June 1895.

the right line company were coming forward as the attack moved on, and some of them now joined in the capture of the last German post on the 9th Battalion's front. The 11th Battalion was to try to advance its flank if the 9th succeeded, but, as might be expected, it found the Germans keenly alert and suffered (its diary says) "a fair amount of punishment."⁴⁴

The 9th Division's attack was entirely successful; it captured Meteren and 354 prisoners with 38 machine-guns. But this success was notably extended by the 1st Australian Division, whose improvised advance, without covering artillery barrage, secured nearly a mile of additional line with 97 prisoners and 16 machine-guns. The 9th Battalion lost only 25 in the advance,⁴⁵ but in the shelling of the next few days its casualties were increased to 140.⁴⁶

The 9th Divn. captured the garrison of Meteren and so shattered the 81st Res. Divn. that, far from counter-attacking, it had to be relieved that night by the 12th Divn. Opposite the Australians the 13th Res. Divn. lost 5 officers and 141 others including most of the III/39th R.I.R., then holding the front line. In one of the posts near le Waton Substitute-Officer Scheidt, seeing the enemy in "thick masses" advancing through the corn, fell back after a fight in which he was wounded. Later, being attacked in rear by Australians whom he had watched penetrating the line and working in rear of other companies, he brought some of his own men out, apparently the only officer to do so. He died of his wounds.⁴⁷

The support battalion on Oultersteene Ridge lost heavily by artillery fire. After dark its patrols tried to reach the old main line but found it strongly held. The new front had to be reinforced by engineers, a company of sharpshooter machine-guns, and two companies of the 13th R.I.R.⁴⁸

Prisoners amply confirmed the reports that an offensive in Flanders was imminent.

⁴⁴ Lt. M. A. McGuire (Leederville, W. Aust.) was killed, as was Lt. J. Moss (Fremantle, W. Aust.) when bringing up his platoon to support, a counter-attack having been foreshadowed in an intercepted German wireless message. (Moss and three others were killed by a shell.) The 11th had 19 casualties during the day.

⁴⁵ When the Australian outposts were advancing, Lt. J. P. Tunn (Red Hill, Q'land) of the right front-line company was seriously wounded through a very brave action. His platoon was passing through a wire-entanglement when one of the men, tripping over it, dropped a Mills bomb out of the cup discharger of his rifle. Tunn dived at it and caught it, but himself tripped on the wire at the same instant and dropped it again. He managed to get to it again and held it on to the ground, where it exploded blowing off his hand and wounding him in the head. No one else in the platoon was hit.

⁴⁶ Twenty-one of these were caused by an accident on the night of July 20, when 850 drums of gas were fired by the British Engineers over the heads of the outposts. Several of the drums fell close behind posts outside the precautionary area, and, only partly bursting, continued to leak gas for many hours.

⁴⁷ German records say that the 81st Res. Div. lost 13 officers and 320 men. These figures apparently do not include men with light wounds, not sent to hospital.

⁴⁸ See *History of the 39th R.I.R.*, pp. 177 et seq.

This advance brought the 1st Division's line almost to Gerbedoen Farm, on the north-eastern outskirts of Merris.

Merris During the afternoon of the 19th the Germans could be seen manning what seemed to be a main line some distance ahead of the new Australian posts; and at 4.45 p.m. next day parties were observed moving in the hedges of Gerbedoen Farm, and thence working towards the Australian line. The enemy's barrage came down, but, as his infantry could easily be stopped by rifle-grenades and Lewis guns, the Australian company commander concerned would not fire the S.O.S. The enemy continued to trickle forward, but the 1st Division's artillery, which at 5.40 laid its fire on these Germans, was well directed and at 7.15 they withdrew.

The history of the 39th R.I.R. shows that this was not a counter-attack. Lt. Schletz of the 3rd company was merely establishing his flank posts in the hedges near Gerbedoen Farm. On the other hand he and the 4th company, which lay next to him, both believed that the Australians were attacking them. The losses of the 39th were fairly heavy this day, including two officers killed. Counter-attacks by the 12th Divn. against Meteren failed.

At 7 p.m. on July 21st the left of the 11th Battalion, covered by a two minutes' burst of fire from artillery and trench-mortars, advanced to the neighbourhood of Gerbedoen Farm and cross-roads,⁴⁹ the 9th Battalion at the same time thrusting forward its posts another 150 yards, beyond le Waton.⁵⁰ Gerbedoen Farm itself was not captured though it was reported to have been so.⁵¹

On the night following this thrust the 11th Battalion was relieved by the 10th. It was characteristic of Lieut.-Col. **July 22 and 23** Neligan that, coming in when Merris had been outflanked on the north, he was determined to outflank it immediately on the south also and, if possible, get his patrols completely round it after dark, and so capture the place. Neligan's instructions to his patrols were:

⁴⁹ Just before the bombardment the commander of the attacking company, Capt. J. S. D. Walker (Woolahra, N.S.W., and Kalgoorlie, W. Aust.), who had been sent up on the 19th owing to the battalion commander's belief that the attack that day required a most vigorous leader, was killed. Command was taken by Lt. L. G. Riches (Mt. Barker, W. Aust.).

⁵⁰ The three prisoners taken belonged to the 8/13th R.I.R.

⁵¹ The German fire of all arms was heavy. The work of Lt. W. A. W. Gudgeon (Bunbury, W. Aust.) was particularly praised.

As far as possible "buying into a fight" must be avoided. . . . It is infinitely better to take prisoners silently than to enter into a bomb-fight which must invariably draw attention to your patrols.

The rifle-grenade is the infantryman's only artillery when operating in this manner; *but*, should trouble occur, the company commander always has at his disposal light trench-mortar batteries (a) to knock out the "snag," (b) to cover his retreat if the "snag" is of such dimensions as to render the game not worth the candle. . . .

The Golden Rule—cautious leading by fearless men; not Daring overriding Caution. . . . Always bear in mind that battalion headquarters must know what you are doing as neither you nor B.H.Q. are running this war on "your own."

Neligan had fellow spirits in Lieut.-Cols. Selmes and Lloyd, at that time commanding the 1st and 12th (Army) Brigades, Australian Field Artillery, which were supporting him.

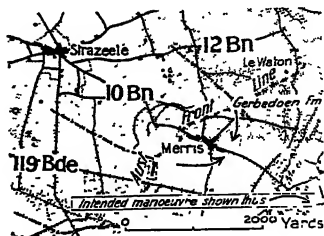
At 8 a.m. on July 22nd patrols went out from the battalion's flanks. On the north Lieut. Sharland and twelve men, moving from the cross-roads 400 yards north of the village and making gradually south-eastwards, penetrated between Gerbedoen Farm and Merris, capturing a machine-gun post and eight Germans. In accordance with plan a second party—Lieut. Graham Smith and twelve men—now pushed out ahead of this. At the same time, working out from the southern flank, Lieut. Lightbody⁵² reported that there seemed to be no Germans within a quarter of a mile. He established a post in a field 250 yards out. But as by this time the Germans were aware of Graham Smith's patrol, at which they were sniping from either the church or the monastery of Merris, Neligan decided to postpone further patrolling till dusk. The northern patrol returned, but on the south Lightbody thrust 100 yards farther out, and Lieut. Chittleborough⁵³ located a small German post 250 yards north-west of him.

At 9.50, an hour after sunset, activity began again. This time on each flank full platoons moved out, the leading one to establish the first post, the second to push out from there, until eventually platoons from north and south would meet on the road leading out of Merris across the valley to Oultersteene. Neligan arranged that every minute a shell, from 4.5-inch and 6-inch howitzers alternately, should drop into Merris

⁵² Lt. G. S. Lightbody, M.C.; 10th Bn. Public servant; of Adelaide; b. Adelaide, 1896.

⁵³ Lt. A. P. Chittleborough, 10th Bn. Clerk; of Adelaide; b. Walkerville, S. Aust., 15 July 1895.

in order to suppress its garrison and also give German headquarters the notion that their front there was intact. When the platoons joined beyond the village this shelling would cease and Merris would be "mopped-up" by a party coming on its garrison from the rear.



At 11.10 reports were received from the leading patrols that all was going well. But at that hour a very heavy German barrage descended on the 10th Battalion's existing outpost-line. The men there moved forward and escaped harm, but the divisional commander now learned for the first time that his front-line brigade was making an attempt to surround Merris. Brigade headquarters appears to have known something of Neligan's scheme, but nothing had been known by division. It happened that the 1st Australian Division had a comparatively new commander; three weeks before, to the deep regret of his officers and men, Maj.-General Walker—last of the British officers to leave the A.I.F.—had been given a British command,⁵⁴ and Brig.-Genl. Glasgow of the 13th Brigade, strongest of all Australian commanders, had come from the south to succeed him. Now, learning at 11.50 that patrols were beyond Merris, and having heard nothing of any arrangements to support or maintain them, Glasgow ordered that they were not to stay out there on any account. Brigade headquarters replied that Merris had probably already been captured. Glasgow then directed that, if the patrols were established east of Merris and communication with them was assured, they should stay there and dig in, but not otherwise.

The German barrage, however, had cut communication with the patrols. Neligan, though he believed they were about to join hands beyond the village, could not give this assurance and he consequently ordered their withdrawal. This was easily carried out by the southern platoons, which had captured a few prisoners, but met practically no resistance. Capt. Hurcombe of the northern company, on the other hand, was faced by

⁵⁴ That of the 48th Div. in Italy.

great difficulty. Lieut. Graham Smith's platoon, moving towards the Oultersteene road, had found itself faced by a German machine-gun post from which there fired two heavy machine-guns. Smith had divided his patrol, attacked both flanks, and taken the post. He was still some distance north of the Oultersteene road when he again found Germans, assumed to be a working party, ahead of him. An officer could be heard lining out the enemy party, which presently attacked. It was at this juncture that Neligan's order to withdraw arrived. Hurcombe superintended the operation—the advanced troops fell back fighting hard, and covered by the two captured guns which fired more than 600 rounds.⁵⁵ A number of Germans were made prisoners, but in these operations, apparently, all were shot. Eight South Australians were hit, Lieut. Scott⁵⁶ being killed.

The officer whom the South Australians could hear organising his men seems to have been Capt. Heinrich, commander of the front-line battalion of the 13th R.I.R., who, when its 8th company was "overturned" near Gerbedoen Farm, led up all the remnants he could gather of this company, and some of Sharpshooter Detachment 19. The regimental history describes their "brilliantly dashing counter-attack which was completely successful. The enemy was thrown back with heavy loss and sought again his old line." The 1st company was brought up but did not have to be used. Farther south the 5th and 6th companies had three officers wounded but were said to have "bloodily repulsed" the attack (evidently that of Neligan's right flank. Actually the total casualties of the 10th Bn. were only nine.)

The policy of the Allied commanders lately had called for larger offensives by their troops than hitherto. On the day after this attempt an attack on Oultersteene ridge by three divisions was considered by XV Corps. The capture of Merris would be a preliminary step. Later it was decided to take Merris immediately, and Neligan was ordered to do it on the night of July 29th, before his battalion left the line. This time the support companies were used, one filing out on each flank, platoon after platoon.⁵⁷ They were to be preceded by a barrage creeping through

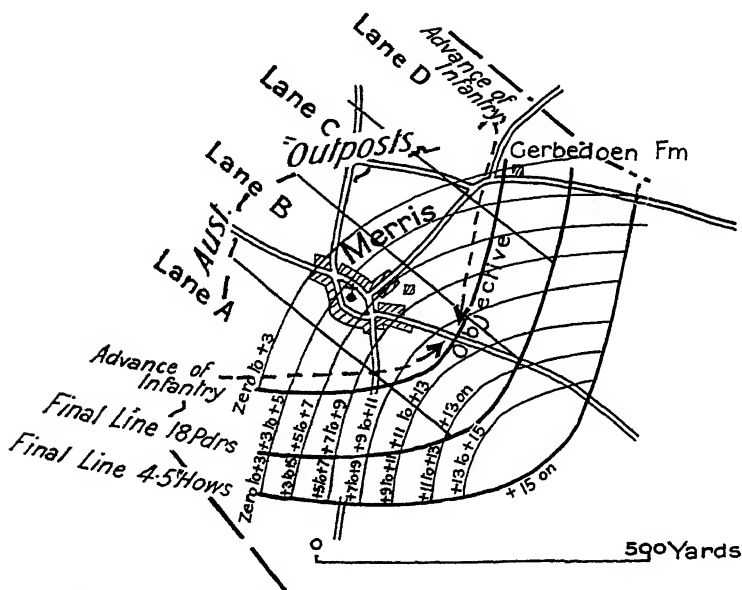
⁵⁵ The guns had to be blown up with bombs and abandoned.

⁵⁶ Lt. C. J. Scott, M.C.; 10th Bn. Draper's assistant; of Gawler, S. Aust.; b. Port Broughton, S. Aust., 4 Oct. 1896. Killed in action, 22 July 1918.

⁵⁷ Each platoon was to have two scouts ahead and flank guards with Lewis guns. Platoons followed one another at 150 yards' distance, advancing between the lanes of shell-bursts laid down by the guns. Each rifleman carried one No. 23 and one No. 36 grenade, and each rifle-grenadier eight No. 36's. Each section had a bill-hook and a pair of wire-cutters.

Merris and 1,000 yards on either flank of it.⁵⁸ This barrage

July 29-30 would start at 12.15 a.m., the fire of the eighteen-pounders gradually becoming stationary as it reached a line 200 yards beyond the objective around the village, that of the 4.5-inch howitzers (on the flanks) eventually remaining 200 yards farther ahead, both then forming a stationary barrage around the infantry



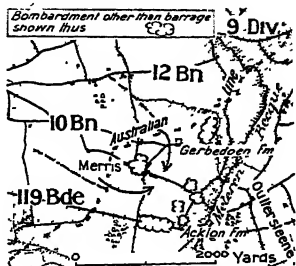
Sketch map showing the lines of the creeping barrage at Merris, July 29th-30th.

until 4.15 a.m. Trench-mortars and rifle-grenadiers would join in the barrage and also bombard German posts on the flanks.⁵⁹ Machine-guns from the flanks would spray the area beyond the barrage. The heavy artillery would

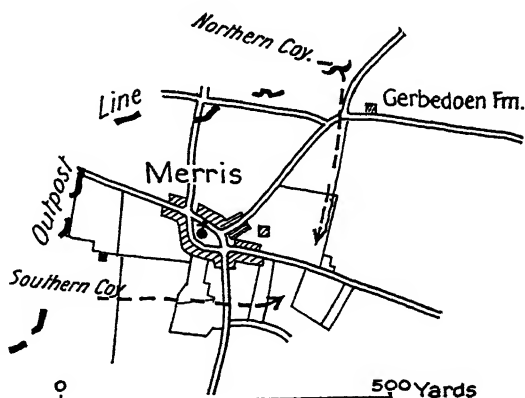
⁵⁸ The barrage was laid down in four "lanes" by the following brigades (from right to left): 64th (Army) Bde., R.F.A.; 1st A.F.A. Bde.; 12 (Army) Bde., A.F.A.; 179th (Army) Bde., R.F.A. A machine-gun north-east of Gerbedoen Farm was specially "smothered" by the fire of two guns of the 179th Bde.

⁵⁹ Seven Stokes mortars of the 3rd A.L.T.M. Bty. fired no less than 1,500 shells in this attack. Neligan managed to arrange that Lt. A. W. L. Macneil, a commander famed since Bullecourt for his determination and capacity, should control them.

lay its fire beyond Gerbedoen, on and towards Oultersteene, and on part of the railway. But Neligan's special device was the shelling of Merris itself, behind his two attacking companies, by a battery (the 101st) of 4.5-inch howitzers and by Stokes mortars. These would fire into the village until 1.15, an hour from the start. Then for five minutes two field-guns of the 12th Brigade would drop incendiary shells into the place—a sign that fire on it would cease, whereupon, at 1.20, his headquarters platoon would enter it from the rear with a free hour for mopping-up. At 2.15 the same field-guns would fire incendiary shells at Acklon Farm, near the railway, a signal to the moppers-up to leave the village; at 2.30, a slow bombardment of the village by the 101st (howitzer) battery would be resumed, in the hope of making the Germans conclude that their front was intact.



While the left company, Hurcombe's, was on the way to its starting point, a chance German salvo exploded among the last platoon, killing an N.C.O. and wounding Lieut. Graham Smith and nine others. This platoon was to have moved through all the others, as those ahead successively formed their posts, and to have met the last platoon of the southern company on the Oultersteene road. It was now brought to the lead to form the first post instead. The company, thus reduced to a fighting



strength of 70, filed out into the deep wheat crop north of Gerbedoen Farm, and was lying ready when the barrage started.⁶⁰

It immediately filed southwards along the road towards Merris, over two large felled trees, until it reached a cross-road on the other side of which there ran south-westwards a tall hedge leading for half a mile to the Oultersteene road. Germans at the cross-road fired on the leaders, but a bomb suppressed them; nine surrendered and were sent straight to Hurcombe's headquarters. The first platoon was here dropped behind the long hedge; the other continued to advance behind the hedge. At intervals some German post on the other side of it fired at them, but it was easy for Lewis gunners to scramble through it on the flank of these Germans and keep their heads down, when they would quickly surrender on receiving a few bombs. At thirteen minutes from the start the barrage passed the farthest objective. By twenty-five minutes Lieut. Pennington with his platoon beside the Oultersteene road, having joined with the sergeant leading the foremost platoon from the south, sent up a rifle-grenade flare, the signal of success.⁶¹

Merris was thus enclosed by eight solid platoon posts, each containing two Lewis guns and at least one captured machine-gun,⁶² but many Germans were still in the area. Hurcombe, hurrying forward with his company sergeant-major⁶³ and two runners, with bombs and wire, was challenged by Germans behind the hedge and one of the runners was wounded. After a bomb-fight Hurcombe obtained a Lewis gunner from the next post and, helped by his fire along the enemy's side of the hedge, attacked and captured 22 Germans and 6 machine-guns. Parties went out as far as the barrage would let them, and 15 more Germans were afterwards taken from the hedge.

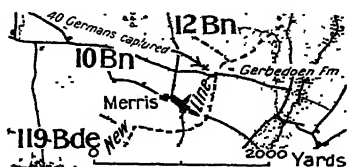
⁶⁰ By some mistake one battery opened 3½ minutes before the rest; but the subsequent barrage was good.

⁶¹ These flares, however, burst too low and were difficult to distinguish from German flares. The heavy artillery was to make craters in the roads beyond Merris in which the posts could shelter; none, however, were found close enough to be of use.

⁶² Some of the posts on the right were at first harassed by the shooting of some of the supporting field-guns and machine-guns. This fire, however, was quickly lifted. Communication, provided by buried cable, by 5-legged ladder lines, and by two wireless loop sets, was excellent.

⁶³ Apparently Sgt. A. G. Neave, M.M. (No. 131; 10th Bn.). Railway porter; of Murray Bridge, S. Aust.; b. Semaphore, S. Aust., 6 Oct. 1890.

It was plain that the enemy was unaware of what had happened. One Australian waiting beside the Oultersteene road made prisoners of nine Germans coming back from the village, and Pennington captured two runners from there, one carrying a message from a company commander saying that the British had attacked but the situation was obscure. About 20 Germans coming from the east strolled at various times into the posts—one an officer, walkingstick in hand, who with his runner strode right on to a Lewis gun before he saw it and threw his hands up. At 2 o'clock, in the morning mist, an Australian messenger, sent back from one of the northern posts for water, walked into about forty Germans close to the old Australian line. He was captured and was asked where the Australian posts lay, but pretended that he did not understand. Later, when the Germans saw they were cut off, he advised their officer to surrender, but was told that the Australians must come and take them; he shouted to the nearest Diggers, who forthwith did so.⁶⁴



Behind all this, at the proper time,⁶⁵ the headquarters batmen, orderlies, and cooks under the sergeant-major⁶⁶ and a young officer—a newly promoted signaller—had walked into Merris down the road from the north-east to the church and so out to the west of the village. It was shattered and apparently empty—some of the ruins were still blazing from the thermite shells. For some minutes the only living thing they met was a cat, which on seeing them fled wildly. The streets would have been difficult to find if in past days some of the men had not, as they said afterwards, “drunk champagne in the cafés there.” Next they came on eight or nine Germans sitting behind a wall, who at once stood up and surrendered with protestations of friendship—one kissed a batman. Farther on the platoon col-

⁶⁴ Lt. C. R. Allanson (Elsternwick, Vic.), Neligan's intelligence officer, had also nearly walked into these Germans, who were standing about apparently lost. He reported their position to Hurcombe, who also took steps to have them captured.

⁶⁵ Some of the incendiary shells, which were to be the signal, appeared to ricochet. The signal, however, was clear enough.

⁶⁶ Apparently No. 116, R.S.M. E. G. Wilson, D.C.M., M.M. Cabinet-maker; of Hindmarsh, S. Aust.; b. 14 Mar. 1893.

lected about twenty. In the ruins of the Asylum were found three dugout shafts; as the Germans did not emerge when summoned, phosphorus bombs were thrown down and the dug-out was burnt. Finally the keenly watched-for bursts of thermite shells on Acklon Farm were seen, and the platoon came out—a crowd of prisoners carrying five of their own machine-guns came in escorted by the regimental sergeant-major, smoking his pipe, and a stretcher-bearer.

In the early morning the troops had a hot meal, food containers having been placed in the advanced dumps⁶⁷ before the attack started and being carried forward when the position was consolidated. About dawn Germans were seen firing in front of the northern posts. Sergt. Faint⁶⁸ went out and shot one through the head, whereupon the rest walked in as prisoners to the nearest Australian post, leaving their machine-gun which Faint then brought in. Several German parties which were already in position in front of the new line, or tried to establish themselves there, were surrounded and killed or captured by officers or others of the 10th working in ones and twos with the ordinary tactics of peaceful penetration.⁶⁹ One German outpost west of Merris held out at dawn but was captured by an N.C.O. and five men, a German officer and 27 others with 5 machine-guns being captured after a number had been killed.⁷⁰ Only one sign of counter-attack appeared—thirty Germans in formation were seen coming from the east towards the new outpost-line. The Lewis gunners swept them away.

⁶⁷ Supplies, stores, and ammunition had previously been dumped on each flank of the battalion. (Each dump contained 20 coils of French wire, 40 coils of barbed "concertina" wire, 100 short corkscrew pickets, 20 boxes of S.A.A., 5 boxes of bundled and packed S.A.A., 50 boxes of No. 36 grenades and 20 of No. 23, 20 tins of water, 2 boxes of Very lights, 50 shovels, 15 picks, and 32 filled Lewis gun magazines.) In a third dump, central to both the others were 200 boxes of grenades, 80 coils of wire, and 200 boxes of S.A.A.

⁶⁸ Sgt. W. Faint, M.M. (No. 355; 10th Bn.). Engine cleaner; of Hindmarsh, S. Aust.; b. Hindmarsh, 27 Dec. 1895. Killed in action, 11 Aug. 1918.

⁶⁹ Among others Lts. F. E. Pennington, W. D. Sharland, and G. S. Lightbody, Sgts. W. Faint, E. W. Mann, C. R. McIvor, A. G. Neave, and C. A. Williams, L.-Cpls. F. T. Elvidge and D. J. Melville, and Ptes. W. A. Cilento, D. Winter, A. Bache, and H. E. Beaton were conspicuous in this work. (Pennington belonged to Carlton, Vic.; Sharland to Unley Park, S. Aust.; Lightbody to Adelaide; Faint to Hindmarsh, S. Aust.; Mann to Alberton, S. Aust.; McIvor to Broken Hill, N.S.W.; Neave to Murray Bridge, S. Aust.; Williams, who was killed on 11 Aug. 1918, to Wirrabara, S. Aust.; Elvidge to Adelaide; Melville to Parkside, S. Aust.; Cilento to Port Adelaide; Winter to Port Wakefield, S. Aust.; Bache to Port Victoria, S. Aust.; Beaton to Lucindale, S. Aust.)

⁷⁰ The Stokes mortars also destroyed a house in which a number of Germans were sheltering on the edge of the village.

Four officers and 175 others had been captured⁷¹—more than there were Australians in the attack; and the first identification, reaching brigade headquarters half an hour from the start, disclosed the surprising fact that the 13th Reserve Division had gone—the prisoners belonged not to a “trench division,” but to the 4th Division, one of the large number that had long been kept in reserve for assault.

It was on July 29 that the infantry of the 13th Res. Divn. “was able to leave this unpleasant sector.”⁷² The historian of one of the incoming regiments⁷³ says that the outgoing division had been “fought out.” “A dreadful line had to be taken over; of trenches actually there was no trace.” The XIX Corps on July 26 had ordered changes in the defensive policy somewhat similar to those carried out on the Somme. The intention to attack had now—as will be explained in the next chapter—been abandoned. The main line of resistance had been withdrawn to the former artillery defence line at Oultersteene. The front-line battalions were to hold this, using the wide forward zone in front as a sort of battleground for patrols and pickets, whose duty was to ensure that the troops in the main line should not be surprised. Troops in the forward zone, when fighting, might be supported by machine-guns, trench-mortars, and assault parties from the main line.⁷⁴ In the forward zone standing organisation was useless (says the history of the 140th I.R.); orders had to be given according to the situation. “Reserves were set apart everywhere as counter-attack companies.”

The 4th Divn., which came from ten weeks of rest, cinemas, and practice in attack, had heard that the sector was active and rather dangerous, but coming in on the night of the 28th found it unexpectedly and most pleasantly quiet. Of the attack which struck it suddenly on the following night, its staff, apparently, could afterwards obtain little information. The blow had fallen on the inner flanks of the southern (14th) and centre (140th) regiments. The history of the former makes the claim—so commonly met with in German regimental histories when dealing with this stage of the war—that part of its troops (who actually were not attacked) by heroic fighting managed to set a limit to the advance (which in truth had reached with ease the entire objective). The 8th company of the 14th I.R. in front of Merris and the 6th in the village were captured, as was most of the II/140th I.R. on the northern outskirts. A counter-attack by three companies of the I/14th I.R. and one of the 140th was ordered. “But meanwhile dawn breaks, and the companies advancing in daylight receive fire so strong that they have to be content to support the foremost elements of the II/14th” (the former garrison of the sector). The commander of the left counter-attacking company, Lt. Zander, was killed. Further British attacks, though only local, against Oultersteene, were expected, and the German reserves were too slight to undertake more counter-attacks. “The

⁷¹ Nine others were found two days later in the cellars of Merris.

⁷² *History of 39th R.I.R.*, p. 180.

⁷³ *History of 140th I.R.*, p. 191

⁷⁴ On the other hand in the event of strong attack the higher command—or, in emergency, the forward battalion commander—might order the forward zone to be abandoned and the barrage to be brought back.

Division," says the history of the 140th I.R., "which had patiently to bear severe censure one account of the loss of Merris, ordered with a heavy heart a withdrawal of our line, which was to be carried out at once."

The 4th German Division lost 14 officers and 270 others,⁷⁵ and the 10th Australian Battalion 1 officer and 34 others (of whom only 4 were killed). The 10th had only two companies—about 160 men—in the attack; the other two held the old outpost-line, which now became the support line. Yet their opponents had not been tired troops, but good ones, well rested and thoroughly trained. Nor should it be lightly assumed that these could easily have made a better showing; it was indeed noted that the resistance was tougher than usual. But when pickets in a new position at night, after challenging an enemy in front, suddenly find a machine-gun firing from close by straight along their trench or from behind their flank, they can do little else but lie low; and when immediately afterwards bombs from unseen throwers crash over or among them, the crisis is one from which the best soldiers may not be able to extricate themselves. When once surprise is effected by bold and skilful men with a good sense of the ground, even tough adversaries may be almost impotent. Haig's Inspector-General of Training is said to have described this attack as "the best show ever done by a battalion in France." Brig.-Genl. Knox,⁷⁶ accompanying General Glasgow to an observation post at Meteren on the day after the fight, said, "Your fellows have done some jolly good things, but this is the best of them. . . . It is simply a tragedy that you are leaving us, simply tragic."

For, despite the efforts of XV Corps to keep the 1st Australian Division continuously on the Hazebrouck front, the order for its relief had come at last—indeed the danger to Hazebrouck, which had caused Haig to send it there, was now vanishing. Its famous Gallipoli colleague, the

⁷⁵ These were probably the figures stated in its report at the time. The history of the 140th I.R. gives the loss of that regiment as 7 and 250. If this is correct the divisional casualties were over 300.

⁷⁶ Gen. Sir Harry Knox, K.C.B., D.S.O., p.s.c. G.S.O. (1), 15th Div., 1915-17; B.G.G.S., XV Corps, 1917-19; Adjutant-General. War Office, 1935-38. Officer of British Regular Army; of Ireland; b. Newcastle, Co. Down, Ireland, 5 Nov. 1873.

29th Division, relieved it between July 31st and August 2nd.⁷⁷

It is a fact of much significance that the events in the Australian sectors at Amiens and Hazebrouck were most closely paralleled on the front of the New Zealand Division near Hébuterne, where, beginning on July 5th, a campaign of peaceful penetration brought about results closely similar to those achieved by the 2nd Australian Division at Villers-Bretonneux.⁷⁸ The reader should of course realise that the efforts here recorded represent only a fraction of the number of attempts made to secure prisoners, which were constant by night and day; but a careful analysis of the available records, German⁷⁹ and Australian, shows that, whereas the Australian enterprises during these months almost daily achieved astonishing success and rarely met with repulse, the German efforts were few, hardly ever successful, and frequently—as German accounts make clear—disastrous.⁸⁰ The full value of the aggressive defence by the Anzacs during the four months of peaceful penetration was not generally known in the B.E.F. or by the British public; the very general opinion was that they were getting too much credit. But G.H.Q. and the headquarters of the Armies concerned were aware of the facts.⁸¹ In Second

⁷⁷ The brigade of the 29th Div. that had been put in to help the 1st Div. had been replaced on July 18 by the 119th Bde., 40th Div., which had been temporarily disbanded but since made up to strength as a "garrison" or "semi-mobile" division with "Garrison Guard" battalions formed from Labour-company men of "B.I." physique. These were men to whom great credit is due for the patriotism with which they faced their tasks; and they enabled part of the 1st Division to get a fortnight's rest. Nevertheless, some of the Australians who served beside them have never been able to agree that the employment of such troops was a wise or useful step. The 29th Div., on the other hand, was now reported by XV Corps to be in a good state of efficiency, and on July 30 it was ordered to relieve the 1st Aust. Div.

⁷⁸ In the second half of July the New Zealand Division gained by this means 500-1,500 yards on a front of 4,000 yards. Its most famous raider, Sgt. R. C. Travis (whose correct name was Savage), 2nd Otago, was killed on July 25. (Sgt. R. C. Travis, V.C., D.C.M., M.M., 9/523, 2nd Bn., Otago Regt. Sheep farmer and horse breaker; of Opotiki and Gisborne, N.Z.; b. Otago, Opotiki, 6 Apr. 1884).

The Canadian divisions were mostly out of the line during much of this period and their activity, when in the line, though most valuable, took rather the shape of formal raiding, which doubtless was more suited to their front.

⁷⁹ The records comprised in German regimental histories are fairly complete and detailed.

⁸⁰ A list of minor operations not covered in this volume will, if possible, be included with the General Index.

⁸¹ And also the neighbouring divisions. The 9th Div.'s commander generously wrote after Meteren: "During the last two months we have admired the successful activity of your troops in defence . . . We sincerely hope that the 1st Australian Division may be on our flank when active operations are resumed." The history of the 29th Div. says: "The 1st Australian Division on our left were setting us a splendid example."

Army the number of American intelligence officers and men sent to train with the 1st Australian Division was more than four times as great as that sent to others. On the Somme Fourth Army ordered that the divisions of III Corps should send officers and men to the Australian Corps for experience in patrolling, the Australian divisions in return sending patrol leaders and scouts to give instruction to the patrols of III Corps.⁸²

But the most striking appreciation came from an unusual source. The commander of the Second Army, Sir Herbert Plumer,⁸³ asked General Glasgow to bring some of his senior officers to a small memorial service on August 4th, the anniversary of Great Britain's entry into the war. When it was over the old chief asked Glasgow to gather his officers aside, and then, calling them round him, said: "You are leaving my army. I am sorry that I cannot inform you where you are going or what you are going to do. I am sorry to lose you, but I wish you success. You know, gentlemen, that it is not my practice to make eulogistic speeches—there will be plenty of time for that after the war. At the same time I would like to tell you that there is no division, certainly in my army, perhaps in the whole British Army, which has done more to destroy the morale of the enemy than the 1st Australian Division."

⁸² Possibly some of the instructors were selected for their fighting prowess with insufficient regard to other qualities advantageous to an instructor. At any rate, with the inevitability of Greek tragedy, Australian pride had a calamitous fall. An officer and 12 other Australians were attached to each brigade of the 58th Div. on the Dernancourt front for three weeks. A prisoner was wanted by one of these brigades, and its commander, instead of keeping the Australian instructors distributed among his own scouts, allowed them on July 22 to be employed as a raiding party. A small British patrol attached acted as covering party. After some slight preparation the patrol tried to cut out a German post on the only part of the Dernancourt front where this was feasible—in front of the extreme Australian flank in the Ancre lowlands. The party lost direction and was challenged by an Australian listening post. The two listeners heard the commands, "Prepare to rush," "Rush!" One of them was then killed by a revolver shot, but the other got to the Australian line. The attacking party came under fire from the listeners, from the main line, and from the Germans. Five of the instructors were killed and their officer and three others wounded—all Australians.

There has been noted only one other case in which, during the months of peaceful penetration, an Australian patrol attacked an Australian post. This was on the night of June 7, when a small party of the 34th Bn. returning in front of the left of the 14th, was reported by one of the listening posts. Lt. Ramsay Wood with a Lewis gunner and three others went out towards the post and was twice challenged by the patrol, "Who are you?" Thinking this might be a German ruse, Wood told his men to take cover before answering. At that moment the patrol opened with rifles and bombs. Capt. Rule of the 14th writes (*Jack's Mob*, p. 288): "Our lads are inclined to look down on the 3rd Division, which is a bit newer than the others, but this crowd fought like mad cats and dished our boys." Two of the 14th were wounded before a flare went up and the mistake was discovered. The patrol leader, Pte. A. Christie (Dubbo, N.S.W.), appears to have taken every proper precaution.

⁸³ On Plumer's visits to the 1st Div. he would ask, "What's this your fellows have been doing?" and would depart without comment, but his shoulders shaking with suppressed chuckles.

CHAPTER XII

THE TURNING POINT

THE 18th of July, 1918, was the turning point of the Great War.

This narrative left the French front when the powerful German thrusts of May 27th and June 9th had been brought to a stop by French—and American—resistance along the Marne and north-east of Compiègne. The attack south of the Aisne had left, bulging

towards Paris, a huge salient in which the German troops were supplied by only one line of railway, which crossed the Aisne at Soissons a few miles behind the western side of the salient. The position here was an invitation to a counterstroke, and that fighter of fighters, Mangin, with the Tenth French Army, had been put in there as had the Fifth French Army on the eastern side of the salient, with orders to harass the enemy with small attacks.

But Foch had already, on June 14th, ordered Pétain to be ready by July 15th for a much larger offensive, the Tenth and Sixth Armies striking the western side and the Fifth the eastern. Foch's plan, formulated on June 16th, was to capture the heights south-west of Soissons so as to bring the German communications under artillery fire—an operation which, he thought, would require a big concentration of tanks and artillery, but not of infantry. The sooner this was undertaken, before the Germans organised their new positions, the better. On



French Armies around the German salient, July 1918.

July 9th Foch extended the scope of this scheme, insisting on the importance of the Fifth Army's simultaneous attack from the east, which he had been inclined in the meantime to reduce. He was now looking to this counterstroke to force the Germans to evacuate their salient in very difficult conditions. This attack would be the first of the disengaging offensives, which ever since March he had been itching to launch.

Foch did not envisage this counter-offensive as a decisive stroke—the decision would be sought for, as on June 27th he wrote to the Italian Commander-in-Chief, General Diaz,¹ by “an attack in full force on all fronts, Salonica, Italy, and Franco-British.” This should begin as soon as the arrival of American reinforcements caused the “numerical” superiority to swing back to the Allies,² who had lost it when the Russians made peace. This general offensive might begin in September (though Foch had no hope that it would end the war until 1919). On June 28th, when asking Haig to arrange a counterstroke for the end of August, he said that the French also were going to attack, not on the Montdidier-Noyon front as previously planned, but “elsewhere.” No notion of his Soissons plan was imparted by him to Haig, and the British representatives at French headquarters apparently had no inkling of it.³

But such plans depended upon what the enemy did in the meantime; an earlier scheme had been torn into ribbons by the events of May 27th. On June 13th, when the Noyon offensive ended, the German command had still some 50 divisions in reserve of which half were being carefully nursed in Flanders, and it was certain that behind the German front preparations were feverishly going on for a new attack as soon as resources could be mustered. Again there set in the

Events
in
June

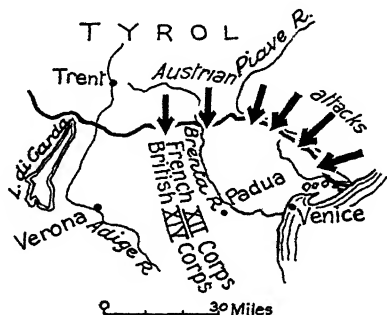
¹ *French Official History, Tome VII, Annexes, Vol. I. p. 11.*

² Probably the Allied troops in France already outnumbered considerably those of the Germans—American divisions were nearly twice the nominal strength of German ones. But Foch was thinking of effective divisions. He had already shown a tendency to overrate the German superiority. (See footnote 58, p. 171).

³ The American Commander-in-Chief, Gen. Pershing, during June suggested to Foch a counter-offensive towards Soissons. Foch said he was thinking of one. Later, on June 23, Pershing offered Clemenceau eight American divisions for such an offensive. Foch again merely said that he was studying a project for an offensive.

strain of anxious search for signs of the direction in which the accumulating mass of German reserves would be thrown.

This time the period of waiting was much more eventful than that which occurred after the Battle of the Lys. First, just when General Diaz, after delay, and under pressure from Foch and Clemenceau, was about to attack the Austrians, the latter, on June 14th, struck at him, attacking both from the mountain front, where they were faced partly by the British and French contingents, and on a wide sector near the Adriatic. In the mountain area they had no success, but on the plains, screening their efforts with shell, they crossed the Piave River. Here great difficulties set in and, the river descending in flood, they were forced a few days later to recross it, having lost, according to Italian claims, 200,000 men, including nearly 25,000



prisoners. The Italian casualties were said to be 80,000. Diaz was constrained by fear that the Austrians would return to the offensive reinforced by German divisions—an apprehension which Foch, aware of the strain imposed on the German Army by the sustained offensive in France, held to be groundless; nevertheless these events obliterated the prospect of the Italians undertaking for the present any more than minor attacks.

At this juncture all the Allied peoples were surprised and puzzled by a speech delivered in the Reichstag by the German Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Herr Kühlmann. Its effect at the front as well as among civilians is clearly shown in the following extract from the diary of an Australian at corps headquarters.

June 26th. Tuesday. To-day from the German papers there is reported Kühlmann's speech, in which he makes the astonishing admission—considering what the German attitude has been of late—that "complete victory by force of arms is not possible to either side." He also blames Russia, not England, for the War. Indeed he expressly says that England was not directly to blame, but only indirectly. Of

course he has been taking Lichnowsky's memorandum⁴ to heart. But whatever he thinks, why has he said it?

Also, in the German wireless there is a report of a speech by Naumann⁵ saying that there is no hope of victory. Now why is this speech sent out by the German wireless? Does it mean that they have come suddenly to realise that there is really no hope—that the American reinforcement has become too big and that the submarine campaign has failed?

It is quite likely that it is a barrage of talk put up before the offensive on precisely the same plan as the barrage of shells will be put up—to sap the strength of the (Allied) soldiers by making them think that Germany is offering fair terms, or is about to do so; and so make them more ready to be taken prisoner when the time comes. Or it may be a diversion, intended in the same way as a raid in another part of the line before the big attack. Or it may be an overture to our Labour Party meeting in England, which has just decided to abjure the party truce and to contest all or any seats at the elections.⁶

Whatever the motives for Kühlmann's statement and its publication—and these will presently be discussed—the effect was very cheering to the Allies, from Foch to the last-joined reinforcement. No one, however, imagined the statement to mean that the enemy command was abandoning its hammer-strokes. Yet for a fortnight after the Noyon offensive ended there was no clear indication of German preparation for an immediate offensive. In Flanders, it is true, an attack was obviously threatening, but on June 29th Haig's chief of intelligence, Brig.-Genl. Cox, judged it to be not yet immediately imminent.

In the second half of June Pétain, who for a time had only five fit divisions in reserve, continued to press Foch for the return of the six French divisions of the D.A.N., still in Flanders. Foch still agreed with Haig that the main danger was in the north, and his relations with Pétain were strained in consequence; but at a conference with Clemenceau he agreed that Paris must be safeguarded by keeping part of his reserves between it and the enemy. Accordingly he suggested that

⁴ See p. 458.

⁵ An eloquent social democratic leader.

⁶ How true these interpretations were is shown on pp. 459-60. But the diarist adds: "I daresay the time will come when it will be difficult to realise that this was the attitude which people had honestly to adopt . . . towards Germany. But, after the negotiations with Russia, even those who were not convinced by the events of the opening of the war have had their eyes opened. The difficulty of entering into negotiations with Germany will be that her standards have become so militaristic that she holds it right to use negotiations for peace as a move of war—i.e., as a means to sap the resistance of a democratic people to such a point that she can break off the negotiations and renew the war upon them at any stage with them disarmed and her arms all sharp and ready."

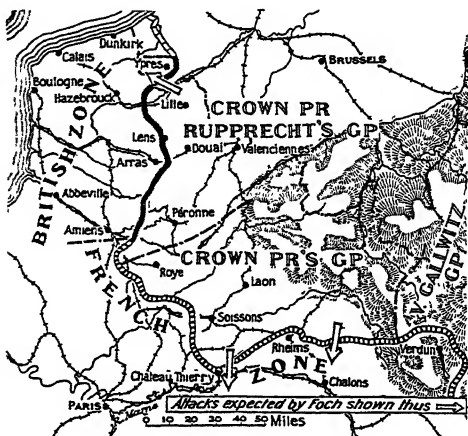
French and British divisions still away from their national zones should now be returned to their respective armies. Haig promised to return the D.A.N. to Pétain in July, General Plumer being able to replace it with reconstituted British divisions.⁷ Haig was the more ready to do this inasmuch as the inclusion in his Second Army of a foreign force—different as regards not only ammunition and supplies, but methods and standards—was definitely irksome to the British Staff and Command, which in this respect may have been more rigid than the French; and he was better than his word. When on June 28th Foch urged earlier action in view of the French Government's anxiety about Paris, Haig agreed to return the rest of the D.A.N. at once; if Paris really was endangered, he said, he must take the risk. The French troops were sent south and their leader, General de Mitry, was appointed to command a new French army, the Ninth, placed behind the junction of the Fourth and Fifth on the Marne.

Haig was sceptical as to the threat to Paris. But at this stage the Fourth French Army east of Rheims, under General Gouraud, received information that the enemy was planning to cross the Marne where the last attack had stopped, only 40 miles from Paris. Foch's hitherto steadfast opinion—that it was by crushing the British Army that Ludendorff hoped for a decision—gradually gave place to the expectation, already firmly held by Pétain, that the Germans would now seek victory by thrusting towards Paris. The first symptom of Foch's change of view was perhaps a letter of July 1st from him to Haig and Pétain pointing out that a German advance of forty kilometres towards Abbeville would separate the French and British Armies; a less advance, towards Paris, would force the evacuation of the capital. No other objectives offered results comparable to these two,⁸ and for either movement the enemy must start from the front between Château Thierry and Lens. That, therefore, Foch concluded, was the vital sector although feint attacks might be expected in Flanders and

⁷ Haig asked in return that the five American divisions then with the British should remain with them, to which Foch agreed.

⁸ See *French Official History, Tome VI, Vol. 2, Annexes, Vol. 3, p. 213.*

Champagne. Early in July, however, indications began to point clearly to a very extensive impending double attack, east of Rheims as well as across the Marne west of it, Rheims itself being excluded though its reduction was obviously intended. The necessary artillery was said to be already on the Marne but material for the bridges would not be there till July 9th or 10th. Airmen confirmed these expectations,



noting the traffic, the activity in bivouacs, and the formation of ammunition dumps, some of which the French artillery shelled and exploded.

When these indications became clear Haig was on leave in England. Signs of attack in Flanders also became much more definite. Foch afterwards wrote:⁹

**Tension
between
the Allies**

A new German offensive was in course of preparation on the seventy-five miles of front which lay between Château-Thierry and the Argonne. . . . Another offensive was in preparation between Arras and Ypres. It was to be made in very great force.

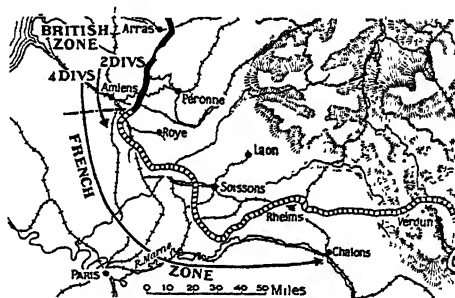
He was greatly puzzled by the divergence in direction of these obviously impending thrusts. Their objects must be related; yet why were the enemy commanders abandoning the sound military rule that such attacks should converge so that the effects of each would progressively assist the other? Moreover the impending attack on the Marne, launched from an already extensive and dangerous salient, could hardly have a strategic aim; the object must therefore be political. About

⁹ *The Memoirs of Marshal Foch* (English edition), p. 404.

July 11th Foch seems to have concluded that the coming thrust towards Paris was probably Ludendorff's main effort for a decision and no longer a feint.¹⁰ In that case, the attack on the British front was unlikely to be as important as he had previously expected, and might soon be abandoned. He therefore on July 12th authorised Pétain to draw upon the French reserves still kept south of the Somme in case help had to be sent to the British. The only reserve now left there would presently be required for Mangin's thrust.

At the same time Foch wrote to Haig three requests; first, that these reserves should be replaced by two British divisions; second, that three others should be prepared for despatch towards the Oise; third, that in case the German reserves opposite the British were sent to the French front, Haig should prepare an offensive—of this suggestion more will be heard in the next chapter.

Haig being away, the chief of his general staff, Maj.-General Lawrence, was sent for, and arranged to fulfil the first request by sending at once the 12th and 18th British Divisions. Next day, on returning to G.H.Q.,



Lawrence found there a telegram from Foch making a much larger call on British reserves "in view of the probable development" of a main offensive in Champagne. Instead of the three divisions to be sent to the Oise, a corps of four divisions was to begin entraining by 2 p.m. next day for Chalons-sur-Marne on the far side of Rheims, and the despatch of a second corps of four divisions was to be prepared.

Haig in London had heard from his staff of Foch's new anxieties, and he had also heard that the signs of coming attack on his own front in Flanders were not such as would

¹⁰ See *French Official History, Tome VI, Vol. 2, p. 434*. In his own memoirs written after the war, Foch merely says that it became clear that the attack in Champagne would be delivered first.

indicate that the last days of preparation had been reached. However, as Crown Prince Rupprecht still kept twenty-five divisions in reserve, Haig feared that the Germans were again deceiving the French leaders by preparing a small blow against them, while reserving their main stroke for his own front. He—and apparently his headquarters—believed that there was “nothing definite to show that the enemy means to attack in Champagne.”¹¹ When on July 14th he arrived back in France and found Lawrence anxiously awaiting him with particulars of the big drafts that Foch had ordered from the depleted British reserves, he assumed that this action was due to “Foch’s becoming still more anxious,”¹² and decided to visit him at once and discover the reason for his change of view. At the same time in a letter to Foch summing up the position on the British front, he wrote:

We ought to be prepared to meet minor operations in Champagne and Flanders to disperse and absorb Allied reserves, and subsequently the main blow in the centre, *i.e.*, between Lens and Château Thierry.¹³

Headquarters of the XXII Corps under General Godley and two British divisions were duly entrained for beyond Rheims, and two more were to be prepared to follow, but Haig forbade their moving until he had seen Foch. This was within his power—the instruction given him by Lord Milner on June 7th,¹⁴ that though he might protest to his government he must obey at once any order from Foch, had not been maintained. On June 22nd Lord Milner had informed Haig that he must loyally obey Foch’s instructions, but if any of them appeared “to imperil the British Army” he should appeal to the British Government *before* executing it.¹⁵

Since May 27th Foch’s prestige had much declined owing to his supposed errors in judging the German intentions—actually his judgment had been singularly cool and, till now, correct. In addition the personal relations between Clemenceau

¹¹ *Haig*, by Duff Cooper, Vol. II, p. 320.

¹² For the actual reason, as stated in the *French Official History* (Tome VII, Vol. I, p. 7), see pp. 454-5.

¹³ This agreed with the opinion of Foch expressed on July 1. (See p. 445).

¹⁴ See p. 174.

¹⁵ A month later, on July 23, Gen. Wilson presented to Haig a draft of instructions in accordance with the arrangement of June 7. Haig had asked for this at the time, but on his now objecting the change was not proceeded with.

and Lloyd George were at this time dangerously strained—the result of Clemenceau's suspicion that the British Government was not pressing its people to extreme sacrifices, and of Lloyd George's resentment at Clemenceau's interference.¹⁶ Unquestionably these mutual suspicions swayed the War Cabinet in telegraphing to Haig, just before he left to meet Foch, an intimation of its anxiety at Foch's order in view of the fact that Crown Prince Rupprecht still maintained a large reserve on the British front. Haig was told that the Government relied upon him to use his right of referring to it, if he thought the British Army endangered;¹⁷ indeed, so seriously did it regard the danger that it was sending General Smuts to confer with him after the interview with Foch.

On reaching Foch (who came to meet him at Mouchy-le-Châtel) Haig found that there had fallen that morning on the

¹⁶ Sir Henry Wilson, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, had been warning the British Prime Minister of the intentions of Foch and Clemenceau to "take us over, body and soul." Actually Clemenceau wanted to ensure the same degree of sacrifice in Britain as in France. To satisfy his doubts as to British thoroughness, Lloyd George invited him (*see p. 171*) to send a French officer to England to investigate the British effort. With Col. Rourc, the French officer selected, Clemenceau sent to England Pierre Boutroux, a military statistician of the French War Office. Boutroux afterwards told Poincaré (*Au Service de la France, Vol. X, pp. 283-4*) that Rourc in England "spoke with a tone of authority which put Lloyd George, Lord Milner, and Gen. Wilson off." Boutroux thought that Rourc assumed this tone not only from Clemenceau but also from Mordacq (Clemenceau's military adviser), "who used to say to every one 'You must talk to the English masterfully.'" Colonel Rourc sent his report to his government during July. On July 29 Clemenceau told Poincaré that he was studying it preparatory to replying to Lloyd George. "The British are trying for an excuse to escape efforts," he said, "... and want us to do the same (reduce the number of divisions) and leave to the Americans the burden of continuing the war. This also is to some extent the tendency of (the French) parliament. . . ." Clemenceau added that he would not agree to this being done by either French or British. "You have to talk straight to the English," he said. Doubtless French antagonism was increased by signs that Lloyd George was again thinking of seeking victory by action in the East.

Lloyd George on his side strongly objected to the withdrawal from the British zone of American divisions brought over by special provision in British ships to train there; and also to the French Government's having, without consulting the British, transferred Gen. Franchet d'Espèrey, after the catastrophe to his group of armies on May 27, to command the Allied forces at Salonica. "It was unheard of," he told Clemenceau, "for you to have given the Army of the Orient to the general who has suffered the most serious defeat of the war!" Referring to Clemenceau, he said aloud—"We don't intend him to become the dictator of a coalition." (*Mordacq, Le Ministère Clemenceau, Vol. II, p. 86.*) Clemenceau confided to the British ambassador in Paris, Lord Derby, a few weeks later: "I can't stand Lloyd George's speaking to me as he did at Versailles." (Lord Derby said that on this point Balfour agreed.) To Poincaré Clemenceau complained, "Lloyd George becomes more and more insufferable and forces me more and more to work against him with Haig and Derby, who are not brilliant (*forts*) but are fine fellows." (Poincaré, *Au Service de la France, Vol. X, p. 297.*)

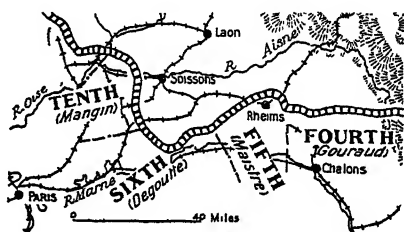
¹⁷ Or, the message added, "if you think that Gen. Foch is not acting solely on military considerations"; which meant, if he was being unduly influenced by fears of Clemenceau about Paris. Haig completely misread this message as a sharp move directed against himself. "If things go well," he wrote, "the Government will take credit to themselves and the generalissimo; if badly, the Field-Marshal will be blamed."

French armies both east and west of Rheims the great double offensive as to whose imminence he had been so sceptical.

But Foch was in high spirits. The real cause of the result that so pleased him was that this time one of the French commanders—General Gouraud, of the Fourth Army, east of Rheims—had carried out in their full spirit Pétain's orders for the meeting of the enemy at a rearward defence

system instead of at the front line. The attack had been expected on the night of the 13th, and by that night all the garrison of the front line except a thin fringe of covering outposts had been withdrawn. The infantry was concentrated in the "intermediate line," 2,000-3,000 yards farther back; the artillery had already been grouped behind this. Gouraud actually aimed at surprise

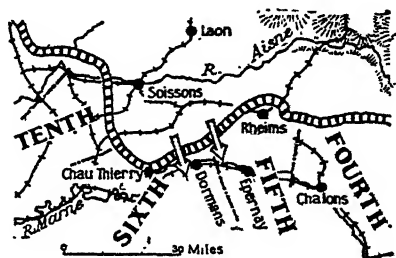
in defence—hiding from the Germans both his knowledge of their intentions and all signs of this effective policy. The night of the 13th passed without attack, but during next day by a deep raid 27 prisoners were captured



from whom it was learned that the German bombardment would begin that night (14th-15th) at 12.10 a.m., the attack following three or four hours later. The French artillery accordingly opened half an hour before the German bombardment. When the German infantry attacked, the French outposts, feeble though they were, succeeded in breaking up the order of the advancing infantry and forcing them in some places to advance between the posts, along the routes intensely shelled by the French artillery;¹⁸ and when at 8.30 the attack reached the intermediate line it was driven off at all except two or three points where it broke into but not through that line. The defeat was one of the most expensive and complete that occurred in any offensive during the war. West of Rheims,

¹⁸ Some of the French forward posts actually defeated the German attack. The garrisons of some others, when outflanked or surrounded, managed to cut their way back to the intermediate line. Many garrisons were, of course, captured.

where the same methods of defence had not—and perhaps in parts could not—be so thoroughly adopted, the German thrust had much more success. General Berthelot¹⁹ of the Fifth Army had obtained leave to defend some parts of the front as being indispensable for the launching of the counter-offensive ordered by Foch. The right of the Sixth Army also, fronting on the River Marne, tried to resist there instead of farther back. At these places the German attack, as so often before, overwhelmed the front line. South-west of Rheims it pierced not only the intermediate but the second line; along the Marne the Germans, screening themselves with smoke, crossed in boats and on rafts and then built many bridges. The 3rd American Division, opposing the western flank of the attack five miles east of Château Thierry, put an early stop to their advance, but on either side of Dormans they penetrated on a wide front and as deep as 5,000 yards. Had the thrust east of Rheims succeeded, the situation would have been most critical—even as it was, great anxiety fell on Pétain, particularly concerning the dangerous thrust south-west of Rheims. But Foch remained buoyant.



Altogether (noted Haig) the situation was satisfactory and a weight was taken off Foch's mind, who feared an attack as far east as Verdun, where he had no reserves.

Haig put to him in strong terms his fears of Crown Prince Rupprecht's attack and his objection to sending his reserves to the new battle area until those of Rupprecht had been sent thither. The signs of coming attack in Flanders were indeed beyond question; Foch agreed, but not even then did he breathe to Haig anything of the counter-offensive for which two days earlier (on July 13th) General Pétain had fixed the date—July 18th. He merely explained his urgent desire to stop

¹⁹ Gen. Buat (who commanded this army until July 5, when he became chief of Pétain's staff), had laid it down that, as the army's front was not yet stabilised after the previous battle, "there was not an inch of ground to lose."

the present German attack, and promised to hold the British divisions ready to return at once if the British front was threatened. On this understanding Haig agreed to send the second pair of divisions completing the XXII Corps. Returning to G.H.Q. he told Smuts that he was satisfied with the position and that, in the general interest of the Allies, he took the responsibility of reinforcing the French. He expected, however, to be attacked soon, probably on the Kemmel front, and that the main blow would fall still later between Lens and Château Thierry.

On his way to meet Haig Foch had settled an even more troublesome problem of which he told Haig nothing. Happening to call at General Fayolle's headquarters,²⁰ he learnt that Pétain had just ordered Mangin's preparations for the counter-stroke on the 18th to be stopped for the time being and some of the troops and artillery for it to be used for reinforcing threatened parts of his line. Foch had immediately countermanded Pétain's orders.²¹ That afternoon Pétain, rendered anxious by German progress south-west of Rheims, asked Foch for a two days' postponement of the counter-offensive, but half an hour later withdrew the request. That night he assured Foch that the attack would be launched on the 18th as arranged.²²

While these events were occurring at headquarters, Parisians could hear the German guns on and across the Marne—and at night see the flickering aurora of the battle. Tense excitement reigned—the possible evacuation of Paris was in many minds. On July 16th and 17th the attack south-west of Rheims made some progress, but Pétain's reserves were growing. The 3rd American Division drove back the Germans on its front across the Marne. Pétain, puzzled by the fact that the Germans had engaged only a quarter of their total reserves, and sceptical

²⁰ Fayolle commanded the group of French armies (Group of Armies of Reserve) that lay next to the British. The Reserve Group had been put in the line there after the German offensive on the Somme. The former Northern Group (G.A.N.) astride of the Aisne, which faced the offensive in Champagne, was now called the Centre Group (G.A.C.).

²¹ He permitted Pétain to draw on these troops only in case of urgent and absolute necessity. One division was taken from the Sixth Army but was afterwards replaced by another. Winston Churchill (*The World Crisis, Vol. IV, p. 498*) says that in this crisis Pétain's new chief-of-staff, Buat, threw his weight on Foch's side.

²² He also told Clemenceau, who with Mordacq urged on him that a counter-attack at Soissons was the proper parry, that he need not see Foch about the matter—the counter-attack would occur.

of the threat in Flanders, now feared an attack north of the Oise, and half of the XXII British Corps was therefore held by him there instead of being sent eastwards.²³ On the other hand Haig, in the midst of his plans for the offensive required of him in August, was now disturbed by statements of prisoners newly taken at Ridge Wood²⁴ which made it certain that the

**Threat
in
Flanders**

Germans were carrying out their final preparations to attack between Hazebrouck and Ypres. Prisoners gave the date of attack as the 18th or 20th. Haig, on the evening of the 16th, asked Foch to return the two divisions last sent. Foch would not agree. On the 17th Haig wrote to the C.I.G.S. in London and, in a letter informing Foch as to the offensive which the British were prepared to undertake, asked for the return of the whole XXII Corps as a necessary preliminary. But that night, before the letter was sent, there arrived at G.H.Q. Lieut.-General Du Cane, senior British military representative on Foch's staff. He brought a letter asking for full information as to the threat of attack on the British; but as he left Foch had given to him a verbal message far more interesting—he could tell Haig that General Mangin's army would next day attack the Germans with twenty divisions. These few words flooded the whole situation with a new light. Haig sent Foch his letter, but asked Du Cane to say that, if the four British divisions were needed for exploiting a success on the French front, they should, of course, be used.

A legend has grown up contrasting Haig's breadth of view throughout this controversy with the supposed narrowness of the British Ministry.²⁵ Actually, notwithstanding Lloyd George's excessive suspicion of Clemenceau, his reaction to the situation, so far as he knew it, seems to have been remarkably like Haig's, whose attitude changed when he learnt, first, of the German offensive and, later of the intended counter-offensive—circumstances unknown to the British Government at the time of its action. The incident was, in truth, only one

²³ It was originally to have been sent east of Rheims; then south-west of it. Now it would reinforce either the Third French Army, if attacked, or Mangin's counter-attacking army (Tenth).

²⁴ See pp. 424-5.

²⁵ For example, see Dewar and Boraston, *Sir Douglas Haig's Command, Vol. II, pp. 207, 217-19*. These writers say (p. 204) that Haig "did not hesitate . . . to send Foch the aid asked for."

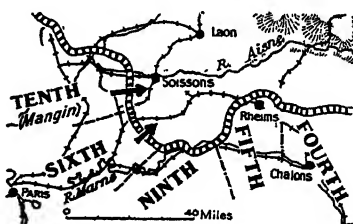
of many illustrations of the difficulty of any sectional leader—Haig, Pétain, or Lloyd George—in judging soundly the whole situation on the Western Front, and of the vital advantage that the Allies drew from the appointment of a generalissimo.

The counter-offensive of July 18th was launched from the two flanks of the German salient west of Rheims (sometimes called the "Marne salient"). Taking command

July 18

on June 16th of the Tenth French Army with a view to harassing the German front and the communications at Soissons, Mangin²⁶ had immediately become active, and on July 5th urged on his group commander (Fayolle) that the local conditions were favourable for a bigger enterprise—a surprise attack to reduce the German salient. The constant minor successes of his army produced an effect similar to that of Australian activity in the Somme area—by July 9th the Germans had had to relieve five divisions there by putting in five that were insufficiently rested, with companies down to 40-50 men but with orders to hold at all costs without expecting reinforcement. The extensive forest of Retz,²⁷ lying close behind most of Mangin's front, gave opportunity for the secret assembly of French tanks, artillery, and reserves. Mangin's suggestion reached Pétain simultaneously with news of another minor success on that front, confirming Mangin's estimate of the enemy's weakness there. A suggestion had also arrived from General Degoutte—that the portion of his army north of the Marne could usefully attack, even without reinforcements.

On July 9th Foch and Pétain not only approved of this extension but decided that the Fifth Army on the other flank of the salient also should attack. When, on the morning of July 13th, it became clear that the German offensive would be launched within two days

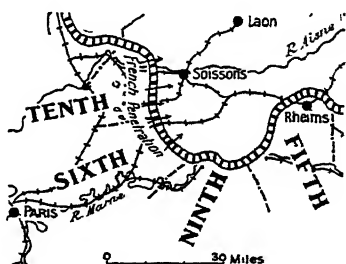


²⁶ He succeeded Gen. Maistre, who was given the Group of Armies of the Centre; the Tenth Army formed the right of Fayolle's group (G.A.R.).

²⁷ Villers-Cotterets, five miles back, lay in the centre of the woods.

on either side of Rheims, Foch and Pétain met and decided that the French defensive and counter-offensive should now become a combined operation.²⁸ On the 16th, in order to allow General Degoutte to concentrate his powers on the attack north of the Marne, the part of his Sixth Army south of the river was placed under General de Mitry of the Ninth Army. This, as well as the Fourth (Gouraud), was ordered to recapture lost ground, but for the present the disorganisation of these two armies prevented their undertaking more than general bombardment and local attacks.

The vital operation was Mangin's. His army struck at 4.35 a.m., without prior bombardment; Degoutte, who required artillery preparation, was not to commence his bombardment before that hour. Mangin had been given 15 divisions—2 more than he had asked for—including 2 American, the 1st and 2nd. Degoutte had 8 including also 2 American.²⁹ Of this total—19 French divisions and 4 American—the attack was launched by 13 French and 4 American (the latter being in infantry strength equivalent to 8 French divisions),³⁰ covered by 2,100 guns, and closely followed by some 325³¹ tanks, which quickly moved out ahead where required to help. Opposite Soissons, on most of Mangin's front south of the Aisne, the German outposts and also the garrison of the main line, completely surprised, were easily overwhelmed. In the centre, accompanied by 125 medium tanks and 45 light ones, the 1st and 2nd American Divisions with the French Moroccan Division between them—all oversea troops, and one of the most formidable spearheads that ever



²⁸ It was on reaching this decision that Foch decided to employ the whole Allied reserve and telegraphed his order for the movement of two British army corps to the French zone.

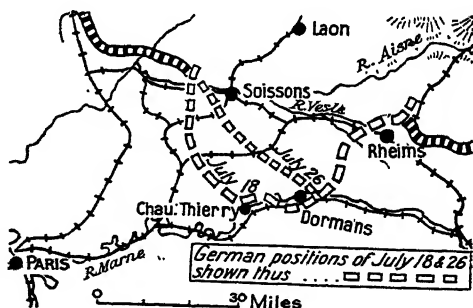
²⁹ The 4th and 26th. Half the 4th fought in the II French Corps, and half in the VII French Corps. The 26th and a French division fought in the I American Corps.

³⁰ An American infantry division was 28,061 strong, including 17,000 infantry and machine-gunners.

³¹ Another 120 were held already in reserve.

struck in the Great War—advanced to a depth of from 5 to 9 kilometres. On their left the 11th and 153rd French Divisions, charged with the awkward task of advancing the flank overlooking the Aisne, penetrated almost as far and finished the day only 5 kilometres from the centre of Soissons and about 6 from the vital railway junction east of the city. That day Mangin's army captured 10,000 prisoners and 200 guns. Degoutte's army penetrated 4 kilometres along its main front of attack, capturing 2,000 prisoners and 50 guns. Only the right of Mangin's army was seriously checked, a mile from the start, in trying to get round the wood of Hautwison, but next day it advanced 5 kilometres farther, and his left reached 3 kilometres from Soissons. On learning of Mangin's success Foch had at once ordered all fresh divisions behind the rest of the battle-front, including the part of the XXII British Corps that had gone to the eastern side, to be brought round to reinforce this successful thrust. The XXII Corps, however, with two of its divisions (51st and 62nd) was already being used to relieve the II Italian Corps in the Fifth Army south-west of Rheims, and on July 20th took up the burden of the attack there. The two other divisions, 15th and 34th, were detrained west of the battle area and thrown in on July 23rd, relieving the 1st American and 38th French Divisions.

After the first surprise of July 18th German resistance greatly stiffened, and, though Foch continued until July 29th his efforts to break through to the plateau north of Fère en Tardennois and so cut off the Germans in the salient, after July 20th the main advances merely followed on deliberate withdrawals of the German line. On the night of July 19th the enemy retired across the Marne,³²



³² The Ninth Army then made its first advance; the Fourth had begun to attack on July 19.

evacuating Château Thierry but still touching the Marne east of Dormans. On July 26th and August 1st began further withdrawals which ended behind the River Vesle. On July 29th Foch ordered the direction of the counter-offensive to be changed from an attack on the flanks to a thrust, mainly by Americans, from the south.³³

German histories show that the double thrust of July 14th was not, as nearly all Frenchmen imagined, an effort by Ludendorff for decisive results, but was, as Haig believed, only another powerful feint intended to draw more reserves from Flanders before the next blow was struck there.³⁴ Ludendorff and Hindenburg still hoped that a renewal of the blow in Flanders by finally crushing the British Army would induce the Allies to seek peace before American help became too powerful.

Again and again (says Ludendorff³⁵) our thoughts returned to the idea of an offensive in Flanders. (But) strong English reserves were still assembled here, even after the French divisions had been withdrawn. . . . An offensive at this point still presented too difficult a problem. . . . There were hopes that, if the offensive at Rheims succeeded, there would be a very decisive weakening of the enemy in Flanders. . . . We decided to stand by our time table and keep the first days of August in view for the Flanders offensive.

In order to keep Crown Prince Rupprecht's reserves intact, Ludendorff used at Rheims divisions already employed in the May offensive there. But though he does not say so, probably doubts already existed in his mind as to whether the attack in Flanders would be decisive. About June 28th the German Crown Prince seems to have urged that the effort should be made in the direction of Paris instead. After consideration Ludendorff rejected the proposal but apparently decided that such an offensive (nicknamed "Kurfürst") should be prepared for launching, if necessary, after the offensive in Flanders.

The fact that Ludendorff even to this extent wavered in the belief that peace could be obtained by the breaking of the

³³ By this time eight American divisions had been engaged in the counter-offensive.

³⁴ Foch, however, was right in doubting the immediate imminence of the Flanders stroke.

³⁵ *My War Memories*, Vol. II, p. 639.

British Army—is significant. Other German leaders had long since abandoned hope of winning the war by military victory. Crown Prince Rupprecht, whose upbringing gave him a political judgment which Ludendorff lacked, wrote to the Chancellor, Count Hertling, as early as June 1st that, though the German armies might still make one or two powerful thrusts, a decisive overthrow of the Allies was now out of the question. A chain of messages from Ludendorff's headquarters giving the number of American divisions identified in France on June 19th as 12, on June 20th as 15, and on the 25th as "16 and probably more" came as a shock to his subordinates. The commanders of the Fourth and Sixth Armies dining with Rupprecht on June 17th expressed the opinion that in Germany's interest the war must be ended that year. The publication, through a mischance, of the secret memorandum written by Prince Lichnowsky, German ambassador in England at the outbreak of war, proving the sincerity of Sir Edward Grey's efforts to avoid war and the obtuseness of the German Government to its own ambassador's warnings, had shaken the belief of many Germans in the absolute justice of their own cause. This accidental discovery of the truth by their people and armies was equivalent to a major defeat for the German military leaders.

That Ludendorff's blind confidence in the success of his offensives was slipping from him is also shown by his adoption in June of a new method to assist them—a bombardment of the British home front with peace propaganda. This interesting but short-lived experiment had a double origin. It was initiated by Germans of liberal tendencies³⁶ who, however convinced of their government's innocence in making and conducting the war, believed that the intention of retaining Belgian territory after the war was not only wrong but in the highest degree unwise, since it kept all parties in Great Britain united in their war effort, including those which had no desire for any spoils of war. Prince Max of Baden, who in Germany led the Red Cross efforts for foreign prisoners there, was foremost in trying to liberalise German war aims and to reach out a

³⁶ Among these was Dr Solf, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, previously Governor of Samoa, well known in Australia as an upholder of enlightened colonial methods.

hand to Lord Lansdowne, the chief English advocate of a peace by understanding rather than by conquest.³⁷ In 1916 there grew among German liberals and social democrats a movement to disarm British liberals and labour and gain American favour by renouncing all intention of retaining control of Belgium after the war. Although the Chancellor, von Bethmann Hollweg, was not convinced of the need for such a declaration,³⁸ these opinions doubtless contributed to bring about the peace moves that were wrecked by the beginning of unrestricted submarine warfare in February, 1917.³⁹

From the middle of 1916 another agency was at work. The "military section" of the German Foreign Office was then placed under Colonel von Häften, an officer of brilliant and independent intellect and demonic energy, whose principle was, "the cleaner the German sword, the sharper it is." His desire for a more humane foreign policy was strangely combined with hero worship for Ludendorff, and his goal became the promotion of liberal measures as means to securing a German victory. In the middle of 1917, when in the Reichstag the liberals and social democrats fought their struggle for the resolution in favour of a peace by understanding, and Hindenburg and Ludendorff checkmated them,⁴⁰ Häften actually secured Ludendorff's half-assent to the principle that a declaration as to Belgium should be used as a weapon to split Germany's enemies. Attempts to win favour for this policy became useless when Russia collapsed and the Chancellor and nation pinned excessive hopes on Ludendorff's plan of imposing peace terms by a victorious offensive in 1918; moreover the imperialistic terms of the peace with Russia only united more strongly the opponents that Häften hoped to divide. But he held steadily to his purpose and at last in mid-June, when the offensive was bringing, instead of quick decision, a lengthening vista of costly attacks, Ludendorff accepted Häften's proposal. "It is high time something was done," he said. He allowed the Foreign Secretary, von Kühlmann, to be confidentially informed that

³⁷ See Vol. IV, p. 12; Vol. V, p. 54.

³⁸ Bethmann's attitude on the Belgian matter nevertheless was that Germany had done a wrong which she must right.

³⁹ See Vol. IV, pp. 47-57.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 691-3.

he and Hindenburg no longer believed that the war could be won by victories in the field alone.

The scheme for a political offensive was sent by Ludendorff to the Chancellor that night. Its object was "to break the English home front" at the same time as the German Army broke the Allied front in France.

It would be utterly wrong (says the memorandum from Häften) to infer . . . that we must renounce the idea of a military victory if we are to break the English home front. . . . By skilful, tireless political propaganda on the part of the Germans the suggestion will be dinned into the English nation that the "knock-out" policy of Lloyd George is alone responsible for the continuation of the war; that it follows imperialistic aims of conquest, while a peace compatible with the honour and security of England could be obtained much sooner, and without further bloodshed, by negotiation.⁴¹

There was no pretence of any intention on Ludendorff's part to agree to terms of this kind—even when the German offensive had finally failed he would not renounce the hope of retaining some control of Belgium. Häften urged the "peace offensive" with purely military arguments.

While peace overtures or a peace feeler are, generally speaking, an action which involves a *relaxation of one's own war efforts*, a political offensive is intended to sap *the enemy's determination* and prejudice his war efforts.

Kühlmann ordered Häften to launch the "political offensive," and himself, believing that negotiations as to peace were in close prospect, made on June 24th, in the course of a speech in the Reichstag, the statement that so astonished and encouraged the Allied armies. Ludendorff, in a rage, cancelled the "political offensive," and on July 8th Kühlmann was dismissed from office.⁴² In the Reichstag a few days later Hertling, having conferred with Ludendorff, announced that if peace offers came from the Allies Germany would not repel them; but Belgium must be kept in Germany's hands as a pawn for the coming negotiations and, after the war, must remain closely connected with Germany.

Immediately after these events the double offensive at Rheims, by which Ludendorff, as he assured von Hintze,

⁴¹ See *The General Staff and Its Problems*, by General Ludendorff, Vol. II, p. 552.

⁴² He was replaced by von Hintze, a former naval officer, trusted by Ludendorff.

"hoped to make the enemy ready for peace,"⁴³ was launched. Its total defeat east of Rheims caused Ludendorff next day to stop the attack there. Gouraud's method, says Crown Prince Rupprecht, was "precisely the one whose employment we feared from the beginning of the Michael attack." Indeed, so effective were Pétain's tactics of defence at a rear line, and so disastrous the attempts, wherever made, to fight the battle in the front system, that the student may well speculate whether it would not have paid the German command far better to have attacked in June or July on the British front where, in accord with Foch's orders, the principle of defence was still that of clinging to the front system. Conversely it may reasonably be suspected that, despite the undoubted shallowness of the British foothold in the north, it would have been wiser, except at a very few points, to have adopted the principle of defence at a line two miles in rear. At all events, the effect of Gouraud's resistance was such that, although departure from that method allowed Ludendorff to succeed on the Marne, it became too dangerous to go on there, and on July 17th a withdrawal across the river, to take place probably on the night of July 20th, had to be prepared for.

In spite of all this—"although," as he admits, "the hoped-for weakening of the enemy had not come about"—Ludendorff decided to proceed at once with the attack in Flanders. The arrangements, already made, for the transfer thither of artillery, trench-mortars, and aeroplanes from the Rheims front had begun on July 16th. As a diversion, a new attack would be made on July 24th east of Rheims to try and pinch out the town. On the night of the 17th Ludendorff went to headquarters of Crown Prince Rupprecht at Tournai to discuss final details of the Flanders offensive. While this conference was sitting next morning, news of Foch's counterstroke reached its members.

Precisely a week earlier the German commanders had received from French prisoners strong warning that a great counter-attack would be launched from the front near Villers-Cotterets on July 14th. But, though the local German army

⁴³ This is Ludendorff's account; von Hintze says that Ludendorff assured him that he was certain the present German offensive would finally and decisively conquer the enemy. (Von Kuhl, *Der Weltkrieg*, Vol. II, p. 376.)

commanders⁴⁴ had asked urgently for reinforcements, the headquarters of the Crown Prince and Ludendorff, busy in their preparations to attack, and probably influenced by that over-confidence which normally affects minds that put their trust in force, did not regard the threat as serious—any French reserves would be quickly absorbed in meeting the new German blow. Tired troops of the Ninth Army were, indeed, relieved as far as possible, and Ludendorff insisted on distribution in depth. When on July 15th the Germans struck elsewhere, the Ninth Army commander reported that an attack by the French was now unlikely, and he did not require the fresh troops previously asked for. A last minute warning from some French deserters, early on July 18th, came too late.

The shock of Foch's offensive was mainly due to surprise; when that had passed, his progress quickly ended;⁴⁵ but Ludendorff immediately stopped the transfer of all except heavy artillery from Rheims to Flanders, and sent to Soissons two divisions of his reserve. They had to detrain north-east of the town—the railway there was under fire and the alternative line which Ludendorff was having built six kilometres east of it, at Missy, was not yet ready; in the afternoon of July 18th Ludendorff began to call on Rupprecht to give up divisions from the precious reserve which had been so long maintained at a cost of such sacrifices to the trench divisions. The Rheims offensive was stopped. On July 21st all notion of attacking in Flanders was also abandoned. Ludendorff writes: "The attempt to make the nations of the Entente inclined to peace before the arrival of the American reinforcements by means of German victories had failed."

The immense sacrifices made by German soldiers and civilians at their leaders' orders, on the promise that Russia's defeat would be turned to advantage on the Western Front, had been fruitless. The German offensive was abandoned.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ Those of the Seventh and Ninth German Armies. The troops on the western face of the salient had been put under a special command (Ninth Army), as their problem was defensive.

⁴⁵ The results, however, broke Ludendorff's confidence in his system of defence by means of a forward zone, at least where shaken troops were concerned. The system was ordered to be abandoned on the fronts of the Seventh and Eighteenth Armies.

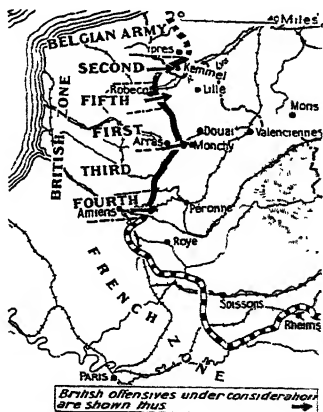
⁴⁶ The effect of this is discussed in *Chapter XXI*, pp. 1045-52.

CHAPTER XIII

THE ORIGIN OF "AUGUST 8TH"

HAIG, when he visited Foch on July 15th, had not yet replied to the generalissimo's request of July 12th for an early British offensive. Foch's letter had pointed out that minor operations of the last few weeks had shown the Germans to be holding their lines with tired troops, below strength or of bad quality, in order to form behind them, for offensives, a mass of picked, strong, trained troops. This gave a chance, which should be seized at once, of launching important surprise offensives. The offensive that he now favoured for the British front was not the one to which he had chiefly inclined in May although it was one of the several that he had then discussed with Haig—an attack from Festubert and Robecq in the Lys area with the double object of shaking the enemy and driving him back in the region of the Bruay mine-field.

Haig favoured another offensive: on July 5th he had asked the commanders of his First and Third Armies (Generals Horne and Byng) to consider a limited attack east of Arras¹ by the Canadian Corps together with three or four other divisions. Accordingly on the morning after seeing Foch he visited Horne and Byng but found them both opposed to the plan unless it was extended. As he had not yet sufficient reserves for this he ordered that the Canadians should reconnoitre and work



¹ Towards Monchy-le-Preux and the ridge beyond the Cojeul.

out a scheme, meanwhile making any useful minor advances. He then sent his chief-of-staff, General Lawrence, to Second Army to arrange for a counterstroke at Kemmel if Crown Prince Rupprecht, as the British staff anticipated, attacked there. Haig himself motored to Beaurepaire to discuss another plan with General Rawlinson.

Since the Battle of Hamel Rawlinson and Maj.-General Montgomery at army headquarters, like Monash and Brig.-Genl. Blamey in the Australian Corps, had been contemplating the possibility of a more important offensive on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau. Rawlinson and Montgomery were greatly impressed with the morale of the Australians which, as Montgomery wrote afterwards, "had undoubtedly spread to other Corps and Divisions." It will be recalled that the general complaint of Australian officers and men in the Morlancourt and Hamel operations was that those successes had been largely wasted in as much as the plans had not allowed the troops to go on and capture the enemy's guns, and so avoid their backlash.² The securing of an advantageous line from which to launch a big offensive had been one of the stated objects of the Peaceful Penetration campaign at Villers-Bretonneux. In one discussion Monash told Rawlinson that the Australian Corps was ready to undertake and maintain a long offensive, but only if its defensive front, then over ten miles wide and held by three divisions, was reduced to, say, a two-division front of 7,000 yards. "I took every opportunity," says Monash in his book, "of pressing these views." He believed he could advance five miles. "Couldn't you go farther?" asked Rawlinson. "If you give me safe support on my right flank," was the reply. Rawlinson suggested several corps for this purpose but Monash shook his head until the army commander mentioned "The Canadians."³

Monash leapt at this suggestion.

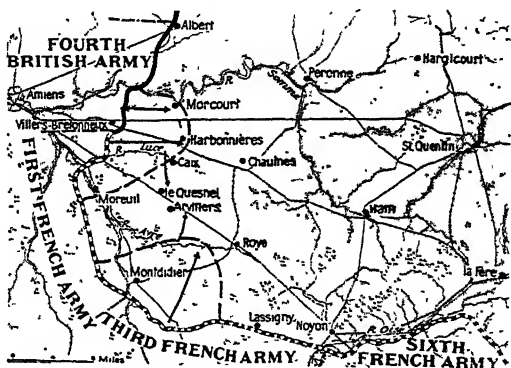
He was unaware that two months earlier, as part of a

² See pp. 240 and 332-3.

³ It cannot be definitely stated that the conversation of which this is Monash's version (given to Keith Murdoch a few weeks later) occurred before Rawlinson spoke to Haig, but Monash certainly believed that it did. The project was also discussed with officers at G.H.Q., but at what stage is not clear. It was understood that Br.-Gen. J. G. Dill favoured it, but that Haig and Lawrence at first had other plans.

scheme laid down by Foch, a similar project of an offensive by Australians and Canadians had by Haig's order been placed before the A.I.F. leaders, Generals Birdwood and White;⁴ and though it differed in many important respects from the scheme eventually elaborated by Rawlinson, Monash, and the Canadians, this earlier scheme influenced the later one so vitally that the narrative must for a moment return to it. Indeed the plan of this offensive has been the subject of so much interest and speculation that its development must here be followed in detail.

In the middle of May Foch asked for Haig's co-operation in an Anglo-French offensive which was to be launched as a surprise if the enemy's attack, then expected, was much longer delayed. Foch asked Haig to study a plan by which Rawlinson's Army and the left flank of Debeney's should drive back the Germans on a narrow front south of the Somme, and so create the opportunity for, and cover the flank of, a larger French attack south-eastwards across the Luce.



This in itself was only part of Foch's much larger scheme of two double or pincers-like offensives against the salients created by the German thrusts in March and April,⁵ the twin effort near Amiens to come first, that on the Lys to be prepared as a counterstroke to any impending German thrust.⁶ In the Amiens offensive the part of the British, though important, would be small

⁴ See Vol. V, p. 680.

⁵ On Apr. 2, a week before the German attack on the Lys, Foch began preparation for the double offensive against the salient created by "Michael."

⁶ It would comprise an offensive by the French D.A.N. to retake Kemmel, and a British attack from the line Festubert-Robecq to disengage the coalfield. These could, if necessary, be undertaken separately, with smaller objectives. Foch assumed that, if separate, the attacks would need 18 divisions, if combined 28.

compared with that of the French who would provide more than half of the northern pincer and the whole of the southern one (to be made by the Third French Army and part of the First). This would advance on a front of about 17 miles, between Montdidier and the neighbourhood of Lassigny, and move northwards across the Avre to Arvillers, 7 miles behind Moreuil. In the northern pincer the Fourth British and part of the First French Armies would make a swift advance of five miles due east on the eight-mile front between the Somme and the Luce allowing another French army to strike southwards from Caix to le Quesnel to meet the southern pincer.⁷ The southern pincer, being more powerful and extensive than the northern, would be the first to move, the Somme-Luce operation—a swift stroke dependent on surprise—starting one or two days later.

Under this early scheme of Foch's the Fourth Army was to form only part of the northern pincer. It would advance between the Somme and the Villers-Bretonneux railway,⁸ but the thrust between the railway and the Luce, and subsequently across the Luce, would be carried out by the Tenth French Army under General Maistre, then acting as reserve behind the British front. Haig would supply tanks for the combined force⁹—Foch estimated that the northern pincer would require 200 tanks, five or six British divisions,¹⁰ and many more French ones.

On May 23rd in passing this scheme to Rawlinson Haig intimated that three Canadian divisions, then in reserve near Arras, would be sent to make up, with the Australian divisions and possibly some of the III Corps, the British force. The thrust was to go deep, some of the supporting divisions leap-frogging over those that started the attack, and so driving it deeper.¹¹ Haig was especially insistent upon secrecy. On May 16th when Foch first mentioned the project to him, Haig urged

⁷ A line would, if possible, be established from Caix to Erchies. The French part in the preliminary eastward thrust would be difficult unless the outstanding height (Hill 110) north of Moreuil, and others west of Moreuil, were taken. The First French Army would therefore attack these also, preferably at the same time but possibly earlier.

⁸ The British flank lay at the Monument, a little south of the railway.

⁹ Foch asked that Maistre might be allowed to begin training his infantry with them.

¹⁰ Three to attack, a fourth to hold the flank pushed forward along the Somme, and one or two more for reserve.

¹¹ Whether the plan of leap-frogging divisions was suggested by Haig or by Rawlinson the records available in Australia do not show. In addition there were to have been some divisions (apparently of III Corps) in reserve. The total British force available was estimated at various times to be 5, 6, 8, and 10 divisions.

him not to "write his plan nor allow the French commanders to talk about it. Success will depend mainly on secrecy." Next day Haig personally imparted Foch's project to Rawlinson and Montgomery and put them in touch with General Debeney; and by Haig's wish Rawlinson himself brought the outlined scheme to Birdwood and White at Australian Corps Headquarters. Their suggestions, written by White, were duly sent to Montgomery and no copy retained at Australian headquarters. But it is now known¹² that they and Rawlinson agreed that for the Fourth Army to carry out its advance south of the Somme as proposed by Foch would be very difficult

owing to artillery fire, (which) the enemy could bring to bear from the Chipilly spur and high ground north and north-west of it on to the country south of the Somme between Hamel and Morcourt.¹³

They therefore suggested that the attack should be extended north of the Somme to include the capture of the triangle of heights south of Morlancourt, from Saily-Laurette to Chipilly spur. Two Australian divisions could attack there side by side. South of the river the objectives, being deeper, could be reached by "leap-frogging" one Australian division over another; south of this again the Canadians should attack in the same manner.¹⁴ Rawlinson advised Haig that, owing to the limited number of the troops available, the line aimed at on the first day—the third objective—should be only four miles distant, falling short of the Morcourt-Harbonnières ravine which, running across the British front, had been set by Foch as the goal.¹⁵ Rawlinson found it difficult to arrange for a simultaneous advance by the French, who were troubled by the existence of high land south of the Luce. Haig, however, promised them the assistance of British tanks.¹⁶

¹² With the kind assistance of the British Official Historian the note from Birdwood and White, dated 28 May 1918, has been found among the bound papers presented to the Staff College, Camberley, by Gen. Sir A. Montgomery-Massingberd as a memorial to Lord Rawlinson.

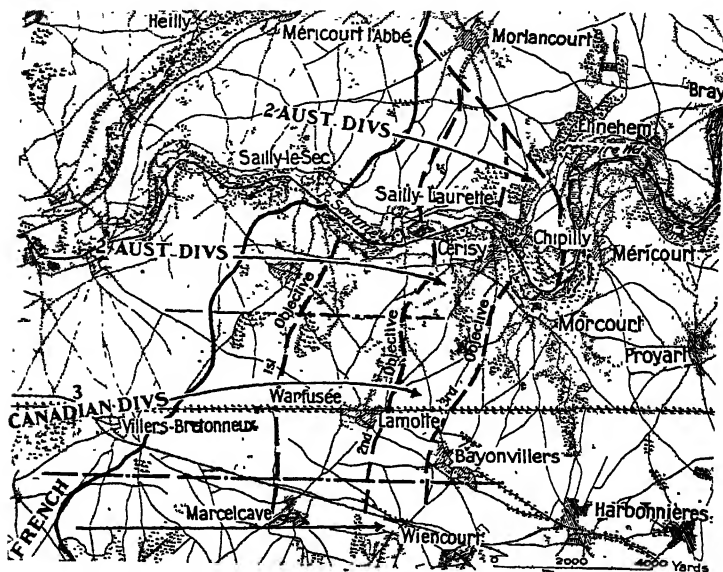
¹³ Quoted from the Fourth Army's appreciation dated June 6.

¹⁴ Except that two Canadian divisions would leap-frog side by side over the division that captured the Canadians' first objective.

¹⁵ The hills rose gradually for fifteen miles to the south-west.

¹⁶ Other important points in the plan were:—the second and third objectives were to be reached largely by the help of tanks, only the first objective being taken under cover of a normal artillery barrage. For his own advance Rawlinson asked for from 150 to 200 tanks. Precautions were suggested against disclosing the increase of artillery; and the bombardment should be the shortest that would suffice to destroy the German front-line system. Birdwood and White advised that "a preliminary bombardment should be dispensed with," but gas shelling used extensively beforehand.

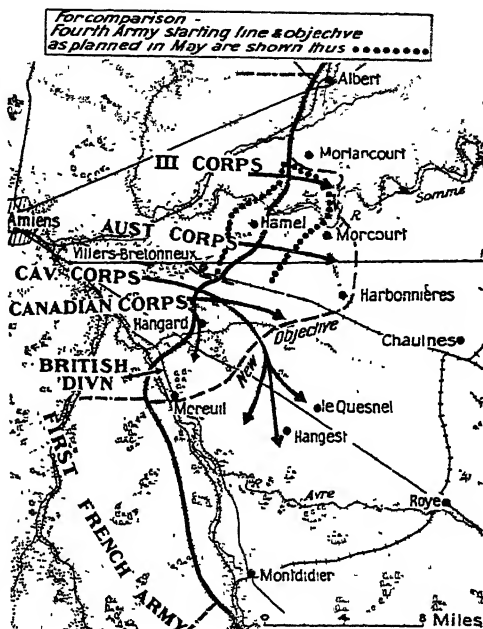
On May 26th Pétain, who was cautious and disinclined to set deep or unlimited objectives but had been directed by Foch to provide for extensive exploitation, ordered Fayolle to have the attack ready for launching on June 15th. But on May 27th the German hurricane burst upon Champagne. The proposed



Amiens offensive ceased for the moment to be practicable; Fourth Army's plan for it was sent to G.H.Q. only on June 6th; and when the German drive towards Paris created a new salient Foch formed, as already described, other plans for a French counter-offensive.

From May 27th until the time with which this chapter mainly deals it was the French who were attacked while the British were able to reconstitute their shattered divisions and build up some reserves. After Hamel, as the conditions already described seemed to furnish an excellent chance for an offensive to disengage Amiens, Rawlinson resuscitated the plan, or rather the British part in it, which he greatly expanded. He could now ask for a larger British force, and his recent experience of the difficulty of arranging joint operations with the

French led him to leap at the chance of carrying out the whole operation between Somme and Luce, and more, with troops under his own command. The Canadians could take over the French line from the Australian flank to beyond Thennes (two miles south-west of Hangard), and the 8th British Division could take over another three miles to a point west of Moreuil. The III Corps could relieve the Australians north of the Somme,¹⁷ so that the four Australian divisions then in his army might all attack south of the river. Covered on the flank by III Corps, four Australian and two Canadian divisions could drive the Germans eastwards, seizing if possible, the old outer-line of the Amiens defences



seven miles distant, beyond Harbonnières, and giving the two other Canadian divisions the opportunity to strike southwards across the Luce; their task would resemble that of the Tenth French Army under Foch's plan, except that the last stage of the southward advance would be carried out by the Cavalry Corps after the flanking Canadian divisions had made an opening by a cleverly planned thrust south of the Luce. Rawlinson also hoped that by thus keeping arrangements in the hands of a single army staff secrecy would be better preserved. If the French wished to co-operate, they should do so,

¹⁷ Under the earlier scheme III Corps was to extend its right only to Mortancourt.

he urged, by constituting a southern pincer, to move northwards from south of Montdidier, thus greatly increasing the effect of the British blow from the north.

Such was the scheme prepared by Rawlinson and Montgomery. Now, meeting Haig at Beaurepaire, Rawlinson offered to carry it out "if he would give me the Canadians."¹⁸

To my surprise and delight (says his diary), I find he has already decided to do this as soon as he could get Godley (XXII Corps) and his four divisions back from the French.

Haig had indeed come to Beaurepaire to put the same project before Rawlinson. It would be the main British operation, and the minor attacks, reconnaissances, and other preparations which he had just arranged to be undertaken near Arras by the Canadians were now intended, he told Rawlinson, to draw the enemy's attention from it.¹⁹

Though he asked Rawlinson to push on with working out the plans, Haig would not concur in any plan involving the extension of the British line, except temporarily, to sectors south of the Luce. Moreover he did not intend to undertake this offensive until Crown Prince Rupprecht's reserves—then estimated at 20-23 divisions—were being drawn away to the Rheims offensive or otherwise engaged.²⁰

Thus on July 17th he was able to answer Foch's request for the preparation of a British offensive. He said he saw "no object in pushing forward over the flat and wet country between Robecq and Festubert." He had ordered his Second Army to study and prepare an attack on Kemmel, to be carried out when the situation as to reserves and other conditions was favourable. But

the operation which to my mind is of the greatest importance, and which I suggest to you should be carried out as early as possible, is to advance the allied front east and south-east of Amiens so as to disentangle that town and the railway line. This can be carried out by a combined French and British operation, the French attacking south of Moreuil and the British north of the River Luce.²¹

¹⁸ See *The Life of General Lord Rawlinson of Trent*, p. 224.

¹⁹ They were intended to mislead his own troops also.

²⁰ In principle, Haig's decision was consistent with Foch's policy that Haig should attack in order to divert German reserves from Rheims. If, as Foch believed, the threat in Flanders had vanished, Haig would attack,

²¹ *Haig*, by Duff Cooper, Vol. II, pp. 330-1.

He suggested that the French troops now north of the Luce, who would be relieved by the British, might be used farther south to strike eastwards between Montdidier and Moreuil. Secrecy and surprise, he added, were essential. On the same day that Haig gave this answer to Foch he himself received from Rawlinson a fairly complete outline of Rawlinson's scheme.²²

Rawlinson and Haig had got thus far with the project while the great German offensive still continued; they had no notion that Foch was about to strike at Soissons. But by July 20th when Foch replied to Haig's suggestion, that stroke had vastly changed the situation. Foch repeated in stronger form the statements of his previous letter: it was now indispensable to grip the Germans wherever the Allies could do so with advantage, and the opportunity existed owing to the method to which the enemy had been reduced—that of massing an offensive army behind the flimsy protection of a poorly maintained, sacrificed, defensive army. The Allies must seize the chance of throwing themselves "without delay against the parts of the front that are simply held by troops of occupation." He still urged Haig to prepare an offensive to free the coal mines—an operation which he regarded as of great importance—as well as offensives at Kemmel and Amiens, but he specially welcomed the Amiens project as being one of the most profitable.

The advance lately made by your Australian troops north-east and east of Villers-Bretonneux as well as the gain of ground achieved by the First French Army west of the Avre are likely to facilitate it.

He added that General Debeney had been preparing a different plan with the same object, and suggested that Debeney and Rawlinson should confer on a scheme to be carried out at once "owing to the prospect it offers of favourable results."

²² On July 24 Haig gave Foch a memorandum more clearly defining his intention as to each of the offensive projects referred to in their previous correspondence. The attack at Kemmel, he said, would be delivered only as a counter-offensive in case Rupprecht struck at him. In that event the Fifth and First Armies, in and south of the mines area, would also counter-attack with such forces as they had. (Headquarters of the new Fifth Army, under Birdwood, with White still as chief of his general staff, had at the end of June taken command of the northern part of the First Army's front held by the XI and XIII Corps and the left division of the I Corps. It held from the neighbourhood of Béthune to that of Armentières, between the First and Second Armies.) If Rupprecht did not attack, but continued to threaten with his reserves materially undiminished, the British Army could only carry out smaller offensives such as the Canadians were now considering near Arras. But if Rupprecht's reserve was used elsewhere, or if it attacked and was defeated without unduly diminishing Haig's reserves, then Haig would attack in the Somme region.

At the same time Foch summoned Haig, Pétain, and Pershing to a conference on July 24th.

Haig felt that it would be wiser for himself to discuss with Foch the main lines of Franco-British co-operation before Rawlinson and Debeney conferred; but he allowed Rawlinson to divulge the project on the afternoon of July 21st to Monash, Sir Arthur Currie (commanding Canadian Corps), and a representative of the Tank Corps.²³ The details of the Fourth Army's new plan as elaborated at this and six or more subsequent conferences will be outlined later. The decision to launch the offensive was really reached at the meeting of commanders-in-chief at Foch's headquarters on the morning of the 24th. By that time Haig too was becoming persuaded that Ludendorff had, at least for the present, abandoned his intention of attacking in Flanders. In a memorandum read to the conference by General Weygand, Foch said that the time had come to pass to the offensive. Having attained equality of battalion strength though not yet in number of divisions—with superiority in aeroplanes, tanks, and artillery, with reserves increased by Americans pouring in at the rate of 250,000 a month, and with moral ascendancy established—the Allied armies had "arrived at the turning point of the road." The Allies must take the opportunity to strike a series of blows at the "flimsy" line of the German trench divisions. The programme should include:

(1) Operations to disengage the following railways indispensable for future operations of the Allied armies:

- (a) The Paris-Avrincourt²⁴ railway in the Marne area—this being the minimum result to be secured from the offensive at present being fought there.
- (b) The Paris-Amiens railway—by a combined British and French offensive.
- (c) The Paris-Avrincourt railway in the Commercy area—by a reduction of the enemy's salient at St. Mihiel, an operation to be prepared at once by the American armies and undertaken as soon as they have the necessary means.

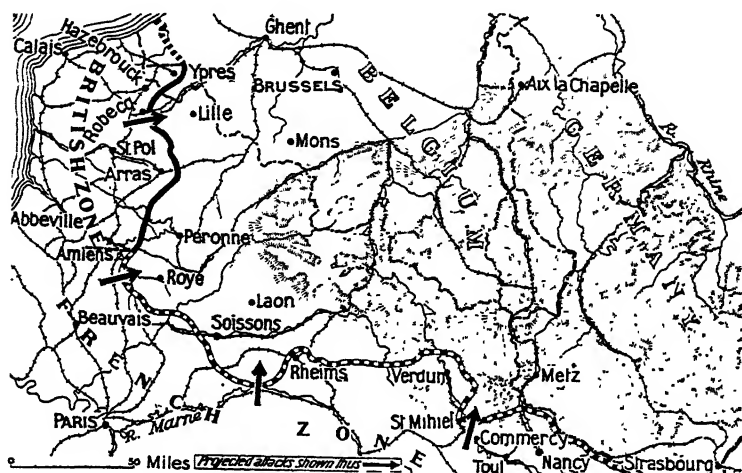
(2) Operations²⁵ to disengage the Northern Mines and push the enemy back finally from the Dunkirk-Calais area.

²³ Maj.-Gen. C. E. D. Budworth (chief of the Fourth Army's artillery) had already been consulted.

²⁴ This is more recognisable as the Paris-Strasbourg railway; Avrincourt was the French frontier station, where it passed into Germany.

²⁵ Comprising, as Foch had planned ever since May (*See pp. 150-52*), two attacks combined or separate, at Kemmel and Robecq-Festubert.

These offensives must be powerfully mounted, be launched with surprise (which "recent operations" had shown to be indispensable to success), and follow one another "at short intervals so as to trouble the enemy in manipulating his reserves and not allow him time to pull himself together."



The main lateral railways behind the British front are shown.

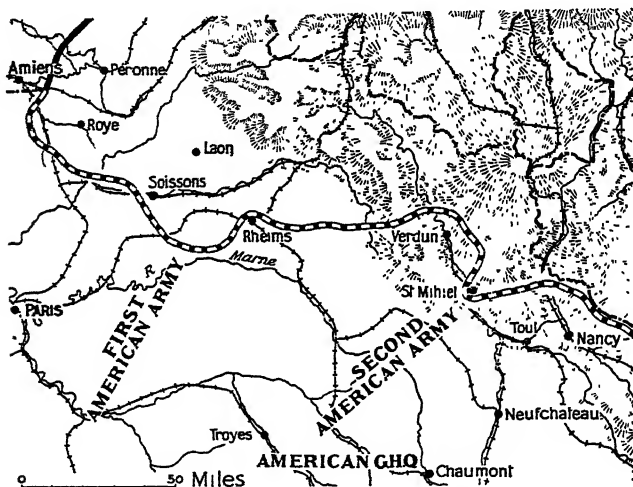
Foch added that it was difficult to see how far these disengaging operations would lead; but, if they succeeded before the season was too late, they might be followed by "an important offensive movement . . . towards the end of the summer or during the autumn."²⁶

According to Foch,²⁷ at first breath none of his hearers seemed quite ready for this ambitious scheme. They had, as Foch admits, some reason. It was only on July 21st that Pershing, seizing the opportunity offered by the increased flow of American divisions to the Marne, had at last obtained Foch's consent to the immediate formation of a separate American army—the First Army was to be constituted on the Marne under Pershing, comprising the six divisions then there and

²⁶ Foch envisaged a decision as soon as possible in 1919, and sought from the three C's-in-C. a forecast of the strength of their armies on Jan. 1 and Apr. 1.

²⁷ *Memoirs*, p. 430.

relieving the Sixth French Army; the Second Army would be formed south-east of Verdun in the front long since allotted for American troops.²⁸ The attack on the vulnerable German salient at St. Mihiel had for some time past been discussed by Pershing and Pétain as a suitable undertaking for the American Army, and Pétain had been thinking of launching there a big offensive, striking eastwards, in the autumn. But here was Foch including it in a scheme of early operations. Pershing pointed out that, eager though his troops were, no American army had yet been constituted. As for Pétain's part in the



Intended fronts for American Armies. French Armies held the front between them and on either flank.

programme—the offensive on the Marne was already being fought, largely with the American divisions; but, Foch was proposing a considerable Franco-British thrust in Picardy and further offensives on a greater scale in the autumn. The French armies had suffered the last three German blows and had since borne much the greatest share in Foch's counterstroke,²⁹ and

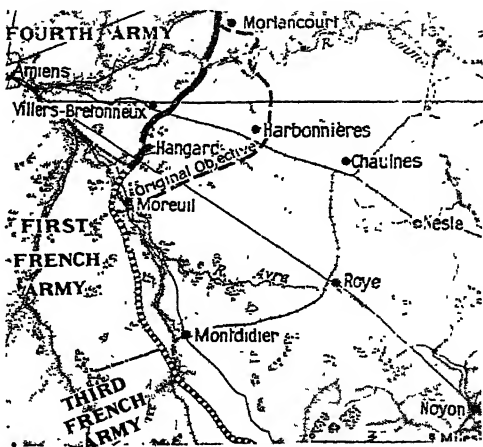
²⁸ The 1st and 2nd Divs. would be sent to this. The plan to form the First Army on the Marne was soon abandoned and the divisions were sent east.

²⁹ The French had lost in the Aisne battle (May 27-June 6) nearly 100,000 men and the British nearly 30,000. In the Battle of Noyon the French lost 40,000 more, and in the double offensive at Rheims about 50,000. Foch's counterstroke had cost another 40,000. The French casualties in the actual fighting of the last eight weeks had thus amounted to nearly 250,000.

Pétain had reason when he now remarked that they were worn out, bled white. Haig was possibly surprised by Foch's persistence in still pressing for an offensive in the mines area, and doubtless felt that the generalissimo overestimated the present strength of British reserves.

But as to Haig's eagerness to undertake the British part in the offensive at Amiens there could be no question. Before the meeting he had suggested to Foch that the French should assist by attacking north-eastwards between Moreuil and Montdidier, and should eventually take over all ground gained by the British south of the Luce.

Foch now arranged to meet him at Sarcus in order to discuss with Rawlinson and Debeney the main lines of their co-operation.³⁰ At this conference, held on the 26th, it was found that Debeney had been thinking of only a small offensive along the Luce. Foch was all for bigger things. It



was arranged that Haig's offensive should be launched as soon as the British XXII Corps, then engaged in the Marne counter-stroke, could be returned to him—probably on August 10th. Haig and Foch agreed that the thrust should be deeper than had been suggested—Rawlinson striking towards Chaules, the important railway junction through which went the German supplies for the Montdidier salient, and Debeney striking towards Roye. On July 21st Foch had begun accumulating French divisions for this offensive: as they emerged from the Soissons offensive, he sent them to rest behind the First and Third French Armies. Here not only were they ready for any possible German counter-thrust in Flanders, but they could

³⁰ For secrecy's sake Foch sent Weygand to warn Pétain not to attend.

also be reckoned on by Fayolle, commander of the army group on the British flank, for extending the front of Debeney's attack southwards, not merely beyond Moreuil but beyond Montdidier.³¹ To ensure secrecy and close co-ordination, Foch on July 28th resolved to place Debeney's army under Haig's tactical command for the offensive, a decision which, when Weygand brought Foch's letter intimating it, pleased Haig greatly. Foch asked Haig to hurry on the operations, and, the return of the XXII Corps being promised two days earlier than anticipated, Haig asked his subordinates to save, if possible, two days in their preparations.

Foch's general order was issued on July 28th and Haig's on the 29th. The completion of the plans was henceforth mainly a matter for Rawlinson and Debeney and their corps commanders—Haig informed Debeney that, to avoid exciting suspicion, he would not visit him again until the attack was launched. After the Sarcus conference the co-operation of Rawlinson and Debeney was most cordial. It proceeded apparently on two principles: first, the British thrust towards the south-east would assist the French by threatening the communications of the Germans opposing them, and the French attacks would therefore begin later than the British; second, as Debeney this time could obtain no tanks from Haig he must bombard the German positions before the attack, which the British would not do; but the French bombardment would not begin until the British infantry attacked. Debeney eventually arranged that on the first day of the offensive the XXXI French Corps north of Moreuil, next to the Canadians, should commence its bombardment at the British starting hour, its infantry advancing three-quarters of an hour later. The IX Corps, next to it, would attack after four hours' bombardment and try to seize the difficult bridge-heads across the Avre south of Moreuil. South of Montdidier the XXXV Corps was to be ready to attack on the second day, when the northern thrust had gone deep enough to give a chance of cutting off the Germans in the Montdidier salient.

But while the preparations were being completed, on August 3rd the Germans were found to have withdrawn voluntarily

³¹ On July 31 Fayolle transferred to Debeney the XXXV French Corps there.

across the Avre except at one or two bridge-heads. At the same time it was found that they had retired over the Vesle in the area of the Marne counter-offensive. On the previous day a similar withdrawal became evident along the Ancre, on the British front,³² Dernancourt, Albert, and Aveluy Wood being abandoned. These withdrawals affected the front of the coming battle only at the Avre, but among the staffs preparing for it there was a moment of anxiety—had the German commanders learned of the coming stroke and were they starting a manoeuvre to avoid it? Foch, the optimist, believing that the German defence was crumbling and a much deeper retirement was now likely,³³ hurried to Haig to urge the hastening of his offensive and was pleased to learn definitely that it would begin on August 8th.³⁴ He urged Haig to drive the attack deep; there was danger, he felt, of Rawlinson's impetus ceasing when the old outer-defences of Amiens were reached. Haig pointed out that, while he wished to seize this line and consolidate it in order to ensure keeping the enemy at a distance from Amiens, nevertheless he did not mean to stop there while the line was being thus prepared. The advance on Chaulnes and Roye (an additional thrust of five miles) was to "be carried out as soon as the necessary troops can move forward," and he had already ordered that the drive must then be directed towards Ham on the Somme, twelve miles farther still. Next day, on studying Rawlinson's orders, Haig received the same impression as Foch, and on the 5th, in conference with Rawlinson and Debeney at Flixecourt, he told Rawlinson to push forward reserves so that, if the Germans had been surprised by the first blow, the farther advance could begin at once. Apparently, however, it was only on this day that Haig definitely promised to Rawlinson three British divisions from G.H.Q. reserve, with which to support this continuation; till then the only assured reserve was the 1st Australian Division, already promised to the Australian Corps.

³² The retirement there actually took place on the night of Aug. 1, a weak screen being left until next morning. On Aug. 2 the British heard of the withdrawal from a prisoner; patrols at once followed the enemy, but his precise front was for some days uncertain.

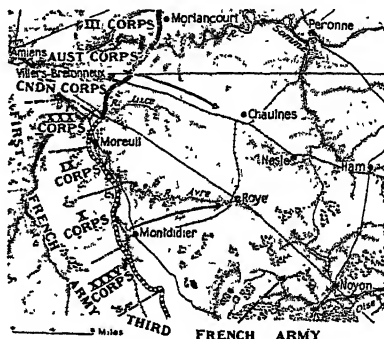
³³ It had been learned on July 24 that the Germans had just reduced the establishment of their infantry battalions from 980 (850 infantry and 130 in the machine-gun company) to 880 (750 and 130 m.-g. coy.).

³⁴ This entailed greater haste for the Canadians, but Gen. Currie accepted the disadvantage.

Foch for his part was led by the German withdrawals to resuscitate the scheme for a southern pincer almost as strong as that planned by him in May. The Third French Army would join in the attack, remaining, however, under French control. But the northern pincer had the main task and would move first, the Third Army striking the day after the XXXV Corps, probably the third day of the offensive, August 10th.

Thus, before the attack was launched, the plan for an offensive "to disengage the Paris-Amiens railway" had developed into a much greater scheme. The *French Official History* pursues too far the lucidity that is its so-admirable feature when it interprets

the actual chain of offensives as a more or less precise fulfilment of Foch's scheme. It might with better reason be argued that he twisted his order to fit the events. The connection between his three "operations to free indispensable railways" was rather forced—the operations on the



Marne had been begun for reasons to which the disengagement of the railway was only incidental.³⁵ The operations of the Americans at St. Mihiel were really planned for tactical reasons—that "hernia" offering two most vulnerable flanks. In any case this attack was out of the question in the near future. The only operation undertaken primarily to clear a railway was that in front of Amiens. Foch's project for British operations in the coalfields area forthwith dropped out of view. Two disengaging offensives were undertaken in close relation to each other—Mangin's counterstroke of July 18th and Rawlinson and Debeney's attack on the Somme. The third, Pershing's blow at St. Mihiel, took place in September.³⁶ Before then the Somme offensive,

³⁵ They ended a few days later with the German withdrawal to the Vesle.

³⁶ Pétain on July 26 agreed to its being undertaken in conjunction with a French operation; but this should be "the main offensive envisaged for the end of the summer and the autumn. It will probably wear out—though for a useful and definite result—the French resources for 1918."

greatly enlarged, and followed by assisting strokes of other armies to right and left, had developed into the first and chief of the "powerful offensives" originally envisaged by Foch as following it "towards the end of the summer or during the autumn." The final enlargement, which occurred when the French and Americans struck on September 26th in the Argonne, represented, with the final offensives in Italy and Macedonia, the further carrying out of that part of Foch's scheme.

It will be seen that, although the Anglo-French offensive to disengage Amiens had been urged and planned by Foch in April and May, it was Haig who had now brought it forward despite Foch's initial preference for another of the earlier projects. Why?

Readers of Haig's "Life" might judge the deciding factor to have been his new-found and significant tactical objection to making the alternative attack, over the "flat wet country" of the Lys. Actually the paramount reason undoubtedly was the success of the *aggressive defence* described earlier in this volume. It is no exaggeration to say that it was by the Peaceful Penetration of the four months, April to July, which here for the first time has been fully recorded, that the Battle of Amiens was decided. Sir Archibald Montgomery begins his volume describing the offensive with the statement that, at the date at which he wrote (a year after the events),

it is not so generally known that this victory could not have been won without the steady and continuous offensive of the Australian Corps throughout the months of April, May, June, and July. To its remarkable achievements during these months may be attributed to a very large extent the increase in moral which was necessary in order to make the battle . . . even a possibility.³⁷

Lieut.-Col. R. M. Luckock,³⁸ of the general staff, wrote in the Fourth Army's diary that the Australian Corps gained "a mastery over the enemy such as has probably not been gained by our troops in any previous period of the War." Not only the moral ascendancy of the Diggers but, even more,

³⁷ *The Story of the Fourth Army in the Battles of the Hundred Days, August 8th to November 11th, 1918.*

³⁸ Maj.-Gen. R. M. Luckock, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., D.S.C., G.S.O. (1) Fourth Army, 1917-19. Officer of Brit. Regular Army; b. Ely, Cambs., Eng., 27 Nov. 1877.

the weakness of the enemy's defences and the dejection of his troops became known to the British leaders through the activity on this front. Naturally these conditions were not the only reasons for the choice of this project. South of the Somme the ground was as suitable for cavalry as any on the British front, and ideal for tank operations. The Hamel fighting had shown that by the well-planned use of tanks on a large scale the losses of the infantry might be greatly reduced. The employment of tanks also favoured surprise—and since the end of 1917 Haig seems to have decided that *complete* surprise must be aimed at in any offensive undertaken. If it was effected here, a great success might be cheaply won; there were few German divisions in reserve in or near the sector. Success would mean a staggering blow to the enemy's morale, and the strategic prize here offered—the freeing of the north and south railways through Amiens—was perhaps the best obtainable with the forces at hand. Doubtless it was the strategic aim that had caused the project to be studied in May. But since then Foch had transferred his main support to the plan for an offensive in the mines area. There could be no doubt that it was the activity of the Australian Corps that prompted both Haig and Rawlinson in July to have the Somme project adopted. It is in his efforts to impress on Rawlinson the chance created by the activity of the "Diggers" that Monash's claim to a share in origination of the scheme really lies.

The evident deterioration of German troops on the Somme front was, of course, only in part due to the Diggers' activity. The artillery and air force had kept the enemy under constant strain, as had the special companies of British engineers with their surprise bombardments with showers of gas drums, now an almost daily practice even on the Australian Corps front. Perhaps equally powerful were the general causes—the Allies' blockade, resulting in shortage of food and other necessities for soldiers' families at home and, to a lesser extent, for troops at the front; the unwisdom of the German military leaders in inspiring inflated hopes, which were followed, despite immense efforts, by gradually diminishing successes calling only for further sacrifices, the hope of victory still burning—but with

ever dimmer flame; the disillusionment spread by the Lichnowsky memoir, skilfully exploited by Allied propaganda showered from aeroplanes; the heavy casualties of the continuous offensive, necessitating copious drafts of youngsters of the 1919 class and the calling of the 1920 class (boys of 18) to the depots. The discipline of the German Army was shaken by all these conditions and also by the return of men from leave infected with the revolutionary discontent now fast spreading through Germany owing to the same causes. In July, for example, German engineers constructing defences of the 54th Reserve Division beyond Ville demanded a six hours' working day. Everywhere the drafts of older men from Russia to the dreaded Western Front were causing trouble. On May 26th Crown Prince Rupprecht wrote of them:³⁹

Unfortunately it is not unusual that in these journeys up to twenty per cent. of the troops absent themselves without leave, for which, when again apprehended, they are mostly punished with from two to four months' imprisonment. This, however, is exactly what many of them wish, as they thus avoid one battle or another.

Behind the German front there had occurred acts of brigandage that went far even beyond the feats of which Australian "bad eggs" and their American disciples in the Abbeville area were accused. On May 18th an order of the Eighteenth German Army⁴⁰ said that supply trains on broad and narrow gauge railways had been attacked by armed bands and pillaged—in future their guards were to be armed with rifles and, if necessary, machine-guns. This may be better understood in the light of a statement in the history of the 114th I.R. (speaking of April 1918, when its division was south of Morlancourt) that the supply of food was so difficult "that the division ordered that the flesh of newly killed horses should be used. On the roads and gullies one now soon saw only the skeletons of horses." The history of the 265th R.I.R. says that, when the 108th Division came into the line at Villers-Bretonneux after the second action in April, "dead horses lying by the road-way tempted many a man to take a bit of meat with him."⁴¹

³⁹ *Mein Kriegstagebuch, Vol. III, p. 402.*

⁴⁰ Holding the Montdidier-Noyon front.

⁴¹ The history of the 13th R.I.R., describing its tour at Merris, says: "Beside the half-unloaded limber, shot to bits, one saw the carcasses of horses lying from whose bloody flesh our hungry men were cutting out shreds."

But hunger was only one of many causes of deterioration. The history of the 31st I.R. tells how, when the regiment lay north of Sailly-Laurette in April, it received a draft from a "march battalion" partly made up of youths with long records of imprisonment only partly served.

A not inconsiderable percentage of them cleared out in the first few nights, never to be seen (by the regiment) again.

On June 29th (according to the history of the 23rd R.I.R.), the 107th Division at Morlancourt received a draft of Brandenburgers—

partly strike-comrades from home—extremely unreliable. Absence without leave, desertion, offences such as had never before been known, increased. These people were a cancer for the front.

These were factors applying to the whole German Army, though doubtless most troublesome in the trench divisions. But the special conditions of troops on the Australian front may be well judged from a note of Crown Prince Rupprecht dated 30th July, 1918:

Especially illustrative of the conditions in the trench divisions is a report of the 107th Division of the Second Army which holds the line in the disturbed sector of Morlancourt opposite the active 5th Australian Division, which is considerably stronger in numbers. Rearward trenches and dugouts are wanting in the sector. The main line of resistance mostly lacks a belt of wire, and the high crops in the forward area conceal enemy movements. The company sectors are on an average 375 metres wide. The average trench strength of the companies amounts to 51 men with 3 or 4 light machine-guns.⁴² . . . This garrison has to supply the forward zone garrison (one-third of a company), the garrison of the main line of resistance, and the assault troop of the company commander. In the forward zone about four outposts can be placed, with 17 men (5 light m.-g. men and 12 riflemen). For the garrison of the main line of resistance there then remain 34 men (2 light m.-g.'s with crews—10—plus 24 riflemen). An assault troop⁴³ . . . must amount to at least 12-18 men. There remain for garrisoning the main line of resistance 2 light machine-guns and 6-12 men.

The feeling of numerical inferiority and isolation has a very depressing moral effect on the men. Added to this are the constant losses.

Dr. August Herkenrath in the history of the 247th R.I.R., speaking of the front at Dernancourt, where in April and May the regiment was opposed by Australians, says that it would

⁴² That is, 15-20 light machine-gunners and 31-36 riflemen.

⁴³ The forward company commander's reserve, for counter-attack.

have been better to withdraw 2-3 kilometres to a properly prepared line, but the Germans had not the men for it. So

we had to stay the summer through in this most dreadful place in the world. . . .⁴⁴

Numbers speak clearly. The regiment in this position lost up to the end of May . . . that is in 45 days, 4 officers and 250 men killed or wounded. In the same length of time in our last position on Blankaart Lake . . . we lost 3 wounded. In front of Verdun, with our ranks much fuller, we lost from September 10 to October 17, 54 killed and wounded, and in Champagne from June 10 to July 30, 36 killed and wounded. It is perfectly clear that, where such enormous losses occur at a time when the company strength has already fallen to a minimum while reinforcements at home are dwindling, a force in a comparatively short time is not only exhausted but eventually absolutely wiped out. . . . The trench divisions melted in a dreadful way, like butter under the sun.

He complains that not enough weight was given to these conditions by commanders at the time or by historians later.

This sector was called a quiet one and the troops were reproached with not having carried on enough work at building trenches.

Precisely the same reproach was levelled at the German troops opposed to the 1st Australian Division at Hazebrouck. Ludendorff having now abandoned his offensive the most exhausted of the trench divisions would quickly be relieved; what could not be quickly repaired was the constant neglect to dig and wire adequate lines of defence when those previously held had been successively taken.

Such then were the tactical reasons which weighed with Monash, Rawlinson, and Haig; the main strategical inducement was to thrust the Germans away from Amiens.

The principal attack was to be carried out—as had also been planned in May so far as the British part was concerned—
 by the two oversea army corps. Neither had
 been involved in the first onslaughts and con-
 sequent retreats of March and April, and they
 had therefore been less strained than most
 parts of the British forces. But there is no question—though

**The
choice of
forces**

⁴⁴ *History of 247th R.I.R., pp. 175 et seq.* The commander of the 13th Div.'s artillery at Hamel ordered on July 8: "We must try gradually to secure a period of quiet between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m. so that it may be possible to carry out reliefs and bring ammunition, stores, rations etc. right up to the front line." The commander of the 41st Div. in front of Villers-Bretonneux complained that his troops would not do the work ordered.

it would have been against the interest of their side, and therefore of themselves, to admit it—that they were also treated as picked, shock troops. Each had been used with success as the spearhead in the later phases of Third Ypres. The Australians had since April been purposely kept in two of the sectors—Amiens and Hazebrouck—most vital for defence, while the Canadians—always near Arras—had been earmarked for offensive use. At the end of April, expecting a German thrust north of Arras, Haig had withdrawn the Canadians from the line, ready to strike. He appreciated their strength—four battalions in each brigade, and 10,000 reinforcements in the depots behind them—and was relieved at getting them into reserve. They were there in May when the Somme offensive was proposed, but early in July, after two months' rest, they began to enter the line again at Arras, and Haig's thoughts turned at once to a possible offensive there. On the day on which he found it impracticable, he wrote:

I intend to send the four Canadian divisions to Rawlinson to carry out the attack which I had suggested in co-operation with the Australians.

It seems possible that on Haig's mental list of his shock troops the Canadian Corps was marked before the Australian. Not only had the Canadians been practically intact since Passchendaele, but the Australians gave him more anxiety in several respects. They were constantly short of drafts, and their depots half-empty.⁴⁵ Their losses in the German Michael offensive had caused three brigades to be reduced to the three-battalion basis (previously forced upon British formations only), and, having been active ever since, their battalions were again far below strength.⁴⁶ A proposal to bring from Palestine all the Australian light horse brigades except two, and use them as infantry reinforcements, had in June been rejected,⁴⁷

⁴⁵ When the May offensive was in prospect, he noted the corps was decreasing.

⁴⁶ The average infantry strength of the Australian divisions on July 31 was 10,561. That of the 46 active British infantry divisions in France (all except the 5th having ten battalions as against the Australian 13) was 9,389; that of the Canadian divisions 12,777; the New Zealand Div. had 12,634 infantry.

⁴⁷ This matter was under consideration when on June 15 the Australian Prime Minister arrived in England, and at a private dinner to him next day the subject was discussed by Keith Murdoch with Sir Henry Wilson. "I'll do anything you want, my boy," said the genial Irishman. Murdoch, taken aback, replied that he thought the Australian cavalry should not be broken up until the same measure was applied to the British (who in France maintained three cavalry

although most of the British yeomanry was brought across. Consequently other Australian infantry brigades would certainly have to be reduced if their divisions entered heavy fighting. On top of everything Haig probably was aware that the Australian Prime Minister, W. M. Hughes, was determined to impose restrictions on the use of the Australian divisions. Hughes was told at various times by Haig, Wilson, and Foch that the war would continue until 1919 at least—Wilson thought 1920;⁴⁸ and foreseeing that, if used in constant offensive, his country's force would dwindle, leaving Australia with much diminished influence for the peace conference—being moved, in fact, by precisely the same anxieties that actuated Lloyd George—he had laid it down, in accordance with the recommendation of a committee of the Imperial War Cabinet, that he was to be consulted before the force was involved in offensive operations likely to involve heavy casualties.⁴⁹ In the back of Haig's mind, also, was always the conviction that the Australian force, being subject to no death penalty, and consequently afflicted with a high rate of desertion and absence without leave, constituted a danger to his army's discipline.⁵⁰ For most British commanders the Australian was the bad boy of the Imperial family; and, though Haig rather liked this scapegrace, it was typical of him that when a month later, the Australian troops being at the height of their successes, a party of editors and newspaper proprietors from Australia visited the front, he could find no subject more inspiring for his talk with them than the grave need for extending the death penalty to their national force.⁵¹ Nevertheless the bad boy was recognised as a present help in trouble; and, though the voluntary recruiting system, to which he clung, was giving less than half

divisions). Australians whom Murdoch afterwards consulted in London pointed out that the light horse was much more valuable to Australia than cavalry to Great Britain, and that, even if brought to France, these admittedly outstanding mounted troops would be more useful as cavalry than as infantry. Murdoch again got touch with Wilson and was assured that the light horse would not be broken up. How far, if at all, his advice affected the decision there is no evidence to judge. But the episode considerably strengthened the view of those around the Australian Prime Minister that the general administrative command of the A.I.F. should not be held by an officer in active command on the Western Front.

⁴⁸ Wilson explained this in an address to the Imperial War Cabinet on June 18, answering criticisms made there by Sir Robert Borden on June 11.

⁴⁹ For all this episode, see *Vol. XI*, pp. 742 et seq.

⁵⁰ See *Vol. V*, pp. 25-32.

⁵¹ This occurred just after their capture of Mont St. Quentin, see p. 873n.

the reinforcement required, he still managed to keep five infantry divisions on the Western Front as against Canada's four.

When possible, commanders selected fresh troops for an offensive. But after the four months of constant activity described in these pages the Australian divisions, though not exhausted, were definitely tired. The 13th Brigade, when relieved on July 12th, was described as "in good heart but undoubtedly tired with the constant strain." The record of a conference of the 10th Brigade on July 21st says:

Certain signs of tiredness and war weariness were admitted, but morale of troops was reported to be good. Hopes of a real spell, in an area away from firing line and where the troops would not be in reserve trenches, were expressed by the commanding officers. No present prospect.

Elliott's 15th Brigade, after its outstanding performance on July 4th, was particularly worn. In the 57th Maj. Aitchison on July 12th reported that the men, though of good morale and

quite capable of carrying on for the remainder of the tour . . . in the near future require a good spell in order to regain their health sufficiently to undergo exceptionally severe shell-fire or continuous exhaustion.

He noted an "alarming increase in the number of men going A.W.L. when the company had been warned for the front line." While most of these were old offenders, a number "have had long service and done excellent work in the past." Capt. Keys (57th) reported his men

badly in need of a good rest. . . . Six from the company have gone A.W.L. within the past ten days. This is absolutely without precedent.

The 60th Battalion held on July 11th a court-martial on four cases of absence without leave, and next day a court of inquiry into eight others. On July 14th and 15th the divisional commander, General Hobbs, interviewed seven men convicted for desertion. On July 17th he told his officers, in a circular which drew the warm approval of General Monash, that he had found some of the men to be nervous wrecks, and that he attributed many of the cases to "lack of comradely spirit" in those who dealt with them. Hobbs suspended seven of the sentences and his D.A.A.G., Lieut.-Col. Ralph,⁵² directed that commanding

⁵² Brig. E. M. Ralph, D.S.O., D.A.A.G., 2nd Aust. Div., 1917, 5th Aust. Div., 1917-19. Officer of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Adelaide; b. Adelaide, 7 Apr. 1876.

officers should not merely read the court records in cases of men found guilty, but should see the men themselves.⁵³

The weariness of which this trouble was a symptom was vigorously fought by means of "recreational training" (now chiefly company cricket, and bathing in the Somme) when the units were out of the line. But it had long been felt that, if the corps was to be used in the rôle of a shock force, it should not be allowed to wear itself out in perpetual minor operations. This principle, it will be remembered, had been frankly stated to Rawlinson by the chief of Birdwood's staff, General White,⁵⁴ and seems to have won some assent. The Australian Prime Minister when visiting the troops before the attack on Hamel, being anxious to help them by any measures that he could reasonably initiate, and also determined to avoid continuous attrition, urged General Monash to press for the early relief that was the subject of so many hopes and "furphies." Monash raised the matter with Rawlinson and with Haig's chief-of-staff, General Lawrence, who at one time indicated that it might be possible for the corps to be relieved by the Canadians.⁵⁵ But by comparison with divisions battered in the retreats of March and April the Australian divisions were not overstrained. Monash frankly explained this to brigade after brigade. He told the 11th Brigade on July 9th not to expect a corps relief; "too much had to be done and there were too few troops to do it." On July 13th he gave the same warning to the 6th Brigade.

His object (says the brigade diary) was to dissipate some unfortunate rumours that the corps was to be relieved soon, and that it

⁵³ Hobbs continued this policy. On July 23, after interview, he suspended two more sentences; and on July 31, when acting in command of the corps in Monash's absence, he investigated a number of other cases of desertion, questioned the convicted men as to their reasons, and, in most cases, decided to recommend suspension of sentence to give the men an opportunity to "make good" again. Some of the best Australian commanders would have regarded Hobbs's methods as merely likely to store up future trouble; but Monash approved of them, and of the success of Monash's discipline—a combination of thoughtful handling and more severe methods—there can be no question. The 3rd Div., which he had trained, was noted by the A.P.M. of the Aust. Corps as having incomparably the best disciplinary record among the infantry divisions. At this very juncture the French Commandant d'Armes of Amiens, Col. du Teil, went out of his way to visit the commander of the 9th Bde. (3rd Div.) in order to express his appreciation of the "splendid conduct" of the troops of that brigade during their time of rest in the city. Monash's methods had, of course, involved endless and patient insistence upon care for the welfare of the troops, especially in the matter of food and recreation.

⁵⁴ See pp. 243-4.

⁵⁵ It appears to have been explained afterwards that reserves were then insufficient to permit the immobilisation of both these corps at once during the relief.

was being much overworked. He explained that, having four divisions, one was always out, and that in each division one brigade was always out, and he assured us that no other corps in the British Army was in the same happy circumstances.

"The men appreciate this straight talking," adds the diary. Afterwards Monash appealed to the officers "to deprecate any spirit of tiredness and infuse cheerfulness by example." At this time—about the end of the Peaceful Penetration operations—the 65th American Brigade (33rd Division) was due for six weeks' training in the front line of the Australian Corps. Of its six battalions, two would be allotted to each Australian line-division. Monash suggested to his divisional commanders that this attachment of 2,000 men per division

will, if properly handled, afford immense relief to our own (more or less tired) troops both as regards the garrisoning of the trenches, as regards fetching and carrying, and as regards digging and wiring.

He added, however, that the American troops were not to be unduly burdened. These plans, as will presently be seen, were suddenly interrupted by those for the offensive.

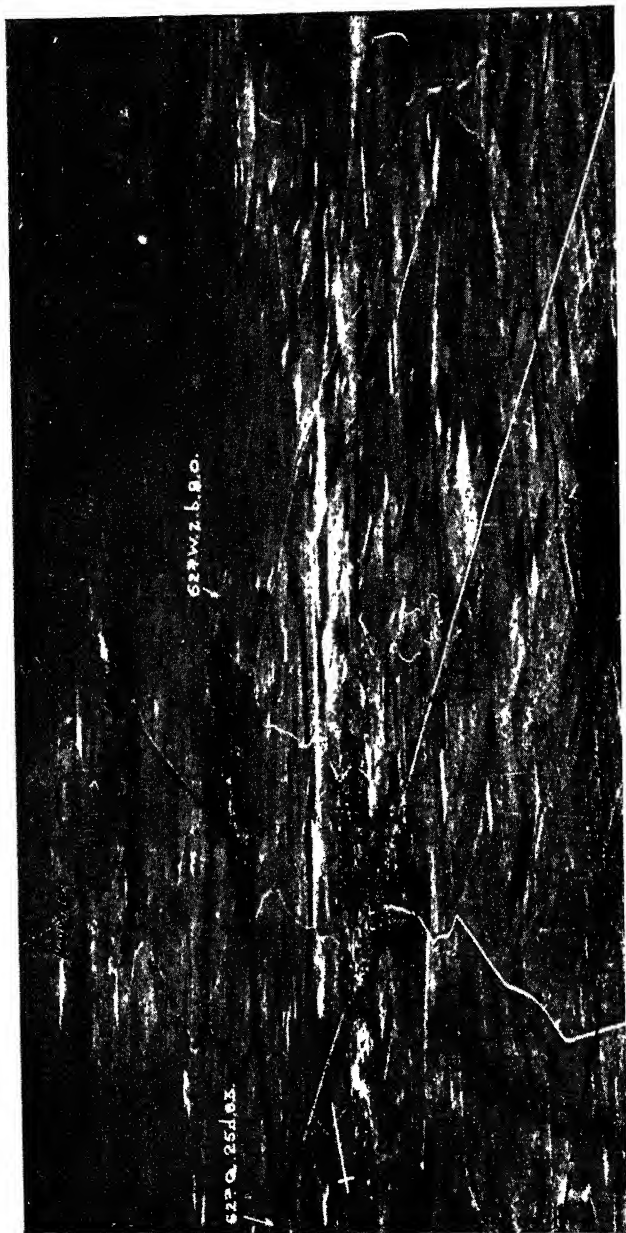
Rawlinson's scheme was for an attack by three British corps. Foch's intervention added four French corps on the right—and at later stages four others, so that the operation, which Rawlinson had planned as exclusively British, became so far as the forces engaged were concerned, preponderatingly French. But the whole project admittedly hung on the success of the first surprise blow to be struck on August 8th between the Somme and the Luce by eight divisions of British overseas troops.⁵⁶ These would be assisted by the British Cavalry Corps, and British tanks, and air force, and their flanks would be closely protected by two divisions of the III British Corps north of the Somme and the XXXI French Corps with three divisions south of the Luce; and the main blow would be accompanied and followed by other important operations. But the whole issue depended upon the shock to be dealt by this mass of overseas infantry—an instrument never before employed in this

⁵⁶ Nine overseas divisions—five Australian and four Canadian—would be on the ground, but one, the 1st Aust. Div., would not be used in the first stroke.



21. THE DIGGERS IN 1918

Officers and sergeants of the 3rd Machine Gun Battalion studying a map in a billet at Sailly-le-Sec early in the year.



22. THE COUNTRY BEYOND VILLERS-BRETONNEUX

Showing part of the ground over which the Australian Corps would advance in the offensive before Amiens. Here its objective would lie between Harbomieres and Vauvillers. The Canadian Corps would advance over the country to the right of the railway.

British Air Force Photograph.

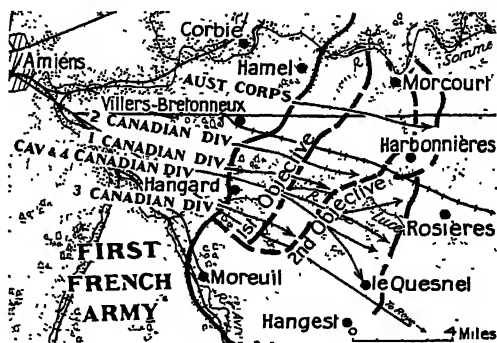
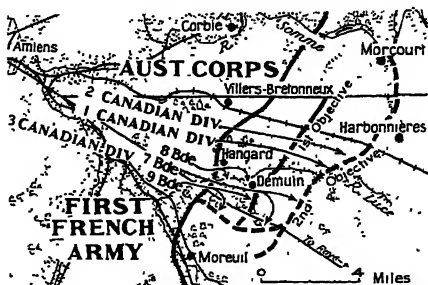
To face p. 489.

manner⁵⁷—to the portion of the German Second Army between the Somme and the Luce.

The shares of the two oversea corps in this task were different. While four Australian divisions and two Canadian (1st and 2nd) would deliver a straightforward blow, the two southernmost Canadian divisions (3rd and 4th) and the Cavalry Corps would have to carry out, mainly south of the Luce, the "opening-out" operations that had always been part of the plan. On the extreme right a brigade (9th) of the

3rd Canadian Division holding a narrow marshy patch at the hamlet of Hourges, just across the Luce from Hangard, must, without arousing the Germans, deploy there under their noses with its tanks and steal round their positions on the wooded high ground above, seizing the heights from which the battleground north of the river was overlooked, and at the same time turning the flank of the Germans

opposing the XXXI French Corps. This thrust would be carried to the second objective by another brigade (7th) passing through, while a third brigade (8th), advancing along the northern side of the Luce, would seize the bridges at Hangard and Démuin and keep touch with the rest of the Corps. By the time the second objective was reached, it was hoped, the



⁵⁷ At Broodseinde on 4 Oct. 1917 four oversea divisions—three Australian and one New Zealand—had been employed in line with outstanding results, but it is doubtful whether Haig then had deliberately aimed at massing his oversea troops.

cavalry would have found it possible to break through, and the 3rd Cavalry Division, crossing the Luce and sweeping through the country north of the Amiens-Roye road, would harass the Germans there and secure the old outer defence-line of Amiens until the 4th Canadian Division, leap-frogging the 3rd and 1st at the second objective, could come up. The villages south of the Roye road would be unapproachable, under fire from the long-range artillery of the French who were to come up there later in the day. After following the infantry on the extreme right, an Independent Force, comprising 80 machine-guns of the Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade, together with cyclists and trench-mortars, under Brig.-Gen. Brutinel,⁵⁸ would go out along the Roye road and hold it until the arrival of the French.

The main eastward drive, between Somme and Luce, would be made by two Canadian divisions south of the railway on a total front of 4,000 yards, narrowing to 3,500 at the finish, and by four Australian ones north of the railway with a front opening from 7,250 yards to 9,000. The Canadians had farthest to go—10,000-14,000 yards—and had the disadvantage of a starting line shaped like a question mark—no amount of ingenuity could rule straight the deep Cachy re-entrant. The Australians had 8,000-10,000 yards to go, and General Monash gave them the advantage of a perfectly straight jumping-off line and barrage,⁵⁹ even though on the right this meant starting nearly half a mile behind the existing front line.

Rawlinson had laid down three successive objectives, to be reached—the first under a creeping barrage, the second with the assistance of mobile artillery, the third by exploitation with the new man-carrying tanks (Mark V tanks lengthened by six feet so as to accommodate two machine-gun crews as passengers).⁶⁰ The second objective, beyond Morcourt Gully, and just short of Harbonnières, was the vital one, being sufficiently distant to free Amiens from bombardment by all

**Plan
for
infantry**

⁵⁸ Br.-Gen. R. Brutinel, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.; Cdn. M.G. Corps. Civil engineer; of Edmonton, Alberta, Canada; b. Alet, Aude, France, 6 May 1882.

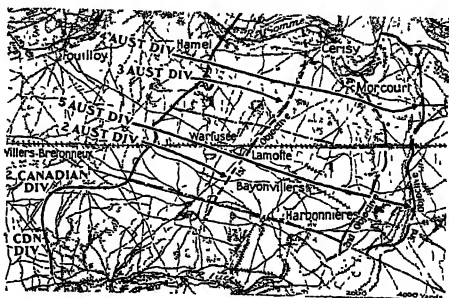
⁵⁹ He truly said that the barrage map was "the simplest ever drawn."

⁶⁰ The first, second and third objectives were shown on the maps in green, red, and blue respectively and were generally spoken of as the "Green," "Red," and "Blue" Lines.

guns except a few of longest range. It was thought likely that the Germans might rush up a reserve division into the old Amiens outer defence-line a mile or two farther on; and if they did so before the attack reached it, the capture of this third objective might prove impossible for the allotted troops. The second objective, however, would suffice, being an excellent position for defence. If, however, the man-carrying tanks and their passengers, or the cavalry, seized the third objective, the third would then become the main line, and commanders must hurriedly prepare it to receive the heavy counterstroke which every one expected the German command to launch in order to retrieve the crucial positions wrenched from it.

As under the May plan, the advance was to be driven deep by "leap-frogging" fresh forces over tired ones at the successive objectives.⁶¹ German experience had taught that the fighting line would probably advance at a quicker rate than the reserves; the reserves must therefore start moving forward as soon as the attack began. In applying these principles Generals Currie (Canadian Corps) and Monash favoured different methods. Currie, for the main attack, followed the principle normally favoured by higher commanders of allowing the divisions to advance to the final objective each along its own ribbon of ground. He placed his 1st and 2nd Divisions side by side, each on a one-brigade front, fresh brigades leap-frogging

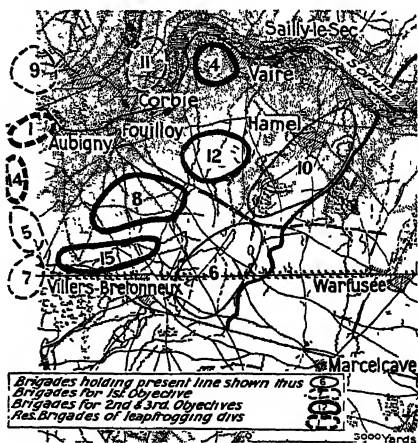
Leap-
frogging



⁶¹ The "leap-frog" in battle is the movement of one body of troops through another; in principle it is indistinguishable from the movement of a main body through a covering force, or of reserves through a main body, to carry out a further immediate attack. The employment of the principle on this occasion, as for the intended offensive in May, was undoubtedly due to either Haig or Rawlinson, though the particular methods were devised by Currie and Monash. Leap-frogging had seldom been carried out by divisions—by the Australians only at Messines—but more often by brigades and battalions. The attack on Pozieres in 1916 was the earliest occasion on which Australians leap-frogged by battalions, although, with the British and New Zealanders, they had used this method by brigades in the August offensive at Gallipoli, and had attempted to do so at the Landing at Anzac.

at the first and second objectives. Monash, on the other hand, engineer-like, planned for more centralised control. The 2nd and 3rd Divisions, from their present positions at Villers-Bretonneux and Hamel with slight adjustment, would seize the first objective, each on a two-brigade front; the 5th and 4th would pass through them "in open warfare formations" and seize the second, each with two brigades and with such support as their allotted section of the guns could give. The reserve battalions of these brigades together with man-carrying tanks would then go through to the third, the old defence-line, along which the tanks would drop machine-gun crews at eighty yards' intervals to hold out until infantry came up to garrison it.⁶²

If the "leap-frog" was carried out on normal lines, the divisions for capturing the first objective would have a comparatively short distance to march and fight, whereas those for the second objective, five or seven miles from the start, would come from bivouacs miles in rear, thus having to march or fight over a distance of eleven or twelve miles in all in battle equipment. In this deep assault the physical strength of the troops would be an important limiting factor, and Monash decided to conserve it by an ingenious arrangement. The four brigades (7th, 5th, 9th, 11th) of the 2nd and 3rd Divisions allotted to attack the first objective would be relieved in the line two days before the battle by a single brigade (6th and 10th) of each division, which would hold the corps front till the attack began and then become the reserves.⁶³ The withdrawn brigades would bivouac from three



⁶² It had originally been intended to use for this third leap-frog the reserve brigades of the 5th and 4th Divs.

⁶³ First they would become divisional and later corps reserves.

to five miles back,⁶⁴ and on the night preceding the assault would march straight from there to their starting tapes. Nearer the line, on the ground through which their approach lay but clear of the tracks, would be bivouacked, mainly on the rear slopes of Hill 104 and about Vaire, the four brigades destined for the second and third objectives—the 15th, 8th, 12th and 4th Brigades of the 5th and 4th Divisions. Thus the approach of these troops, whom it was specially desired to keep fresh, would be shortened by two or three miles, which, with the dreary mile-an-hour progress of such marches,⁶⁵ meant the avoidance of so many hours' fatigue. Before the battle, while bivouacked behind the front line, these brigades had, of course, to be under tactical control of the commanders of the front-line divisions. As soon as they leap-frogged at the first objective, the command would pass to the commanders of their own divisions, 5th and 4th.⁶⁶ Monash realised that this system involved what, with less experienced commanders and staffs, might have been a considerable difficulty. The leap-frogging divisions must make the preparations for their own supply and assembly in the same sectors in which the divisions for the first objective were carrying out similar preparations. But he knew that he could trust his commanders and staffs, from division down to platoon, to help one another to the utmost. He accordingly divided the corps area into two zones, right and left, the divisions working in pairs, two divisions in each zone.

They have been made mutually responsible as to boundaries (he said on Aug. 7)—they have had to settle that amongst themselves—I told them I would have nothing to do with it. They work under the senior divisional commander for the purpose of these battle preparations. I told them I was not going to listen to any complaints and not going to entertain any decisions as between the pairs. This has worked very well and has allowed a mixing up of units as never before.

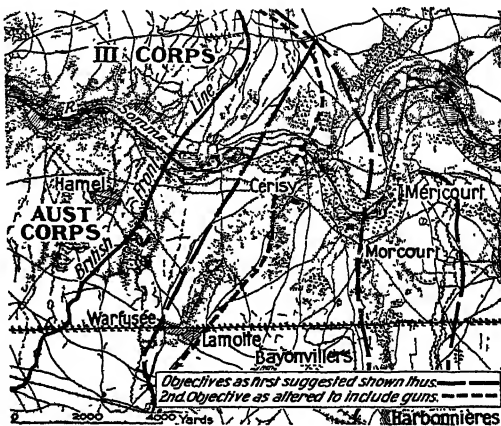
⁶⁴ Their bivouacs eventually chosen by the several divisional commanders were near Bois l'Abbé and in the Somme valley north and south of Aubigny and at Corbie.

⁶⁵ Experience of the queue-like progress—start and stop—of previous approaches rendered it certain that a quicker rate was unlikely. Monash intended that the reserve brigades also of the 5th and 4th Divs. should be bivouacked ahead of those for the first objective; but the camping grounds arranged for them by their divisional commanders were near Vécquemont and Aubigny, beside those of the 2nd and 3rd Divisions' troops.

⁶⁶ This avoided the contingency that occurred at Messines, where, when the 4th Div. leap-frogged in the afternoon, the commanders of the divisions, beyond whose line it went, retained control of the line won in the morning. This quickly resulted in the artillery fire of the rear division being shortened and falling upon the infantry of the forward division.

In the actual battle the system adopted might have entailed another difficulty. Though the successive leap-froggings⁶⁷ and changes of command might proceed smoothly if the attack went well, the intermixture of troops would complicate the problem if the attack received an early check.⁶⁸

The change of tactical methods at the first objective was necessary because this was the furthest line that could conveniently be covered by a creeping barrage from field-guns emplaced behind Hill 104. After finishing that barrage a proportion of the batteries was to drive forward to support the leap-frogging divisions. It was estimated that this move would take two hours and, as the advance to the first objective would have taken another two hours, the leap-frog at the first objective would occur—for the six Australian and Canadian divisions in the main advance—at four hours from the start. The two Canadian divisions operating south of the Luce would have a time-table based on different needs.



When the project was explained by Rawlinson on July 21st,⁶⁹ Monash pointed out that the suggested first objective

⁶⁷ There were exactly three of these: by first-objective brigades over second-objective brigades (and their own front-line brigades) on their way to the tape line; by second-objective divisions over first-objective brigades at the first objective; and by reserve battalions over the rest of second-objective brigades at the second objective.

⁶⁸ When Monash laid his scheme before his divisional commanders, Gellibrand (3rd Div.) asked whether it would not be better to put the four divisions on narrower fronts and let each use its own resources in pushing its thrust to the final objective, but Monash did not encourage his interjection.

⁶⁹ Those present were Rawlinson, Montgomery, and the G.O.C., R.A., and a G.S.O. of Fourth Army; Currie and Br.-Gen. N. W. Webber (B.G.G.S., Canadian Corps); Monash and Br.-Gen. Blamey (B.G.G.S., Aust. Corps); and the G.S.O. 1 Tank Corps.

—along the next ridge ahead of the Australian line—lay short of the long valley from Cérisy to beyond Warfusée in which lay the bulk of the enemy's guns. It would be a fatal mistake to leave the enemy still in possession of his whole artillery after the first advance. Monash suggested that the objective be made the second ridge (though not including Cérisy) and this was approved. On the Canadian front the first objective, at the old French defence-line east of Marcelcave, was already so deep that the Canadian field-guns could not cover their infantry with a barrage creeping the whole way to it.

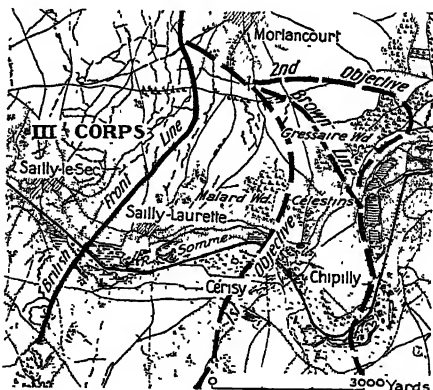
The Australian attack would be straight forward except in one contingency—that of failure of the difficult protecting attack on the heights north of the Somme and their offshoot, the Chipilly peninsula. With these still in their hands the German gunners could shell in flank and rear the Australians

**The danger
from
Chipilly**

advancing past them along the slopes south of the river. It will be recalled that this danger had been pointed out to G.H.Q. in June, when it was first urged that the heights north of the river must be at-

tacked and Birdwood and White proposed that two Australian divisions should attack there. Now the task was laid upon two British divisions (58th and 18th) of the III Corps, which would take over the front there from the Australians at the beginning of August. The front of attack there was 4,500 yards

and the depth 4,000-5,000 yards, the objectives being practically the same as those suggested in May. The first lay on the second spur ahead of the line, between the steep gullies containing Malard and Célestins Woods; the second had originally included only the long, hairbrush-shaped, Chipilly spur, protruding across and commanding the Somme valley. But to



furnish a complete screen Gressaire Wood and part of the Bois de Tailles far along the Bray-Corbie road, were now added to these already difficult objectives; it was realised that these woods might not be taken until the second day, and an intermediate objective, the "Brown" Line was therefore provided. Monash feared that the British might find their task here too difficult, and laid his plans accordingly.

The Fourth Army's attack was to be assisted by 432 fighting tanks⁷⁰—it was their assistance which, as at Hamel, made possible the employment of so few infantry considering the breadth and depth of the stroke.⁷¹ Assembling and advancing by Hamel methods, the tanks for the first objective would move with the infantry on the fringe of the creeping barrage.⁷² Hamel had proved that, if the day was dry, the normal smoke and dust of the shell-bursts would raise a sufficient screen; if it was wet five per cent. of smoke shells would be included in the barrage. The protective barrage during the wait at the first objective would be half smoke. The Canadians would screen themselves from the Germans on their right and III Corps from those on its left by smoke barrages.⁷³ Fresh tanks—supported by all those that had survived the first stage—would lead on the infantry to the second objective. In this stage the tanks would go farther ahead of the infantry and endeavour to suppress enemy positions, which the infantry would then mop-up and occupy in accordance with the practices at Vaux-en-Amienois.⁷⁴

⁷⁰ Gen. Debeney asked Rawlinson to lend him British tanks but none could be spared.

⁷¹ The front of each Australian division in the first stage was nearly 4,000 yards, and in the second rather more. At Third Ypres divisions had attacked on a front as narrow as 1,000 yards.

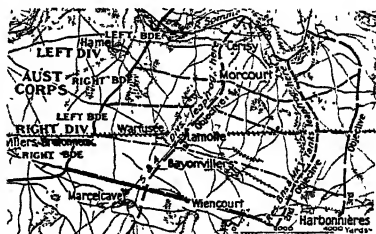
⁷² On the nights preceding zero night the tanks would come up to woods or villages 3-5 miles behind the front. Thence, starting at 9.30 on the last night, they would drive to positions 1,000 yards behind the infantry (throttling down their engines at 3,000 yards from the German line so as to reduce noise). From there in the last half-hour of preparation they would move to the infantry tapes with extreme care, as many bodies of infantry had to be passed through. To drown the chatter of the tank engines, bombing aeroplanes would fly over from 9.30 p.m. on Aug. 7 until midnight, and again for one hour (3.20-4.20 a.m.) before the start; machines of No. 3 Sqn., A.F.C., also would fly over the Australian front during the night. During the battle, airmen of the special squadron (No. 8) would try to locate and if possible protect the tanks.

⁷³ The Canadians also would depend on smoke to screen their infantry beyond the limit of their creeping barrage in the first stage, when attacking Marcelcave.

⁷⁴ These were carried out before batches of training troops by demonstration companies of the 5th Aust. Div. together with tanks of the 5th Bde. The exercises included an advance under a creeping barrage, an attack on a strong-point, and an attack on a farm. The demonstration company carried out the practice first, with other troops watching. These then carried it out themselves with the tanks.

Being unprotected by the smoke of the barrage the tanks would offer easy targets to any field-guns within view, but most of the field artillery should by then have been captured. It was also arranged that in the second and third phases of the advance aeroplanes⁷⁵ would drop smoke bombs in front of certain enemy villages or defences as prearranged with the commanders of infantry and tanks. While the infantry was digging in on the second objective the Mark V tanks would patrol as long as was desired by the infantry commanders and would then be withdrawn (in the Australian sector, to the long Warfusée-Cérise valley), only one company being retained forward, in close support, by each division. In the exploitation for the capture of the third objective the only tanks participating would be Mark V*—each carrying 15 passengers with Vickers or Lewis machine-guns.⁷⁶ In general the Canadian plans concerning the tanks were the same as the Australian. Each corps was given a brigade of tanks

(each comprising four battalions of fighting tanks—144 in number—and a company of 24 carriers). The III Corps would have one battalion of Mark V tanks—36 in all—and the Cavalry Corps two battalions of whippets. In the Australian Corps these



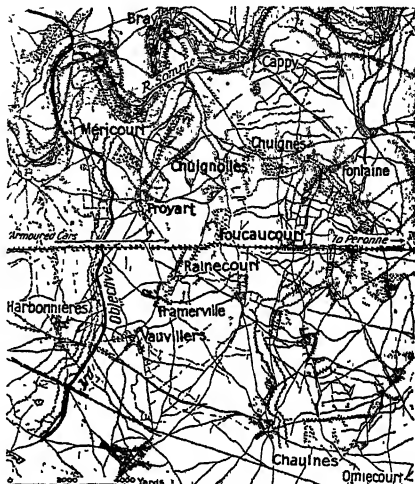
tanks were allotted—two companies (24 tanks) for leading each division to the first objective; the same, plus survivors of the first stage, for the advance to the second objective; and one and a half companies of Mark V* (18 tanks) for each division in the third or "exploitation" phase. This would give, for the Australian front, 48 tanks (one to 160 yards) in the first stage; up to twice that number for the second stage; and 36 (one to 250 yards) for the third stage. But throughout the first two stages one additional company of Mark V tanks would advance behind the junction of the two divisions to make

⁷⁵ Including those of No. 3 Aust. and Nos. 5 and 9 Brit. Sqns.

⁷⁶ These tanks were always referred to in speaking as "Mark V star." Under the Australian plans most of them carried one Vickers and two Lewis machine-guns with reduced teams.

sure of their connection.⁷⁷ In all corps, as at Hamel, the tanks came under the orders of the commanders to whose troops they were attached, and these gave them their tasks. Each tank carried an infantry scout, and many machines had the colours of their infantry painted on them.⁷⁸ All tanks along the line were allotted special objectives.⁷⁹ By Monash's order at least three were allotted to clear Cérisy village, just beyond the first objective on the left.

At a late stage in the preparations a battalion of sixteen armoured cars, the 17th,⁸⁰ was sent to the 5th Tank Brigade, under the Australian Corps, with a view to the cars driving eastwards into enemy country along the Roman road from Villers-Bretonneux,⁸¹ the only practicable route. They were given a list of suitable places to raid⁸²—twelve cars would do what damage they could; four others would form a special patrol, to avoid fighting but to bring back to Monash information as to the



⁷⁷ This would decrease the average front per tank, but the concentration would be in one sector only. On the right flank three of the tanks supporting the Canadians would, during the first stage, cross to the northern side of the railway, in order to facilitate the mopping-up of the cutting and embankment, for which the Canadian Corps was responsible. They would return to their own side before Marcelcave.

⁷⁸ General instructions for co-operation were passed through the tank battalion and company commanders who were at divisional and brigade headquarters respectively.

⁷⁹ Thus the 2nd Div. arranged for three of its tanks to guard the right flank and, with three more, to deal with Marcelcave and its northern outlier, La Bastille mill, at the first objective.

⁸⁰ It had been serving with the First French Army.

⁸¹ The Amiens-Roye road also was a Roman road.

⁸² Vauvillers (billets and railway detraining point); Proyart (divisional headquarters and billets); Chaignolles (ditto); Framerville (described as corps headquarters and dumps); Cappy (aerodrome and dumps); Foucaucourt (corps headquarters and dumps); Chaulnes (railway junction); Omiécourt (dumps); Fontaine (aerodrome, divisional headquarters, and dumps). But if the map in the German Official monograph is correct, this information was far from accurate.

position of German reserves.⁸³ To make a track for these cars Monash arranged for special parties of pioneers to follow the attacking infantry along the Roman road.⁸⁴ Brig.-Genl. Courage of the 5th Tank Brigade arranged for three additional tanks—school tanks from Vaux—to tow the cars, if necessary, over débris and shell-holes in Warfusée. The most difficult problem for the tank commanders would be that of assembling the tanks for the 3rd Canadian Division beyond the bridge over the Luce, at Hourges, only 700 yards from the German posts.

The Fourth Army's barrage would be rather denser than that lately employed in attacks of the Australian Corps;

The artillery

Rawlinson's artillery would have to be increased from 1,000 guns to 2,000 of which precisely half were eighteen-pounders.⁸⁵ The main creeping barrage, between Somme and Luce, would first descend for three minutes 200 yards ahead of the infantry (a proportion of these first rounds being smoke shell), the 4.5-inch howitzers laying their fire 200 yards ahead of the eighteen-pounders, and one-third of the heavy artillery bombarding vital points—villages, cross-roads, gullies, redoubts—beyond that. The Australian infantry preferred to follow a barrage of high-explosive shell with instantaneous fuses ("ground shrapnel," as they called it),⁸⁶ the Canadians chose shrapnel. The great curtain of shell-fire would advance for forty lifts, moving 4,500 yards in about 2 hours and 20 minutes.⁸⁷ To prevent the Germans from withdrawing their guns, the density of the barrage would increase when crossing Warfusée-Cérisy valley. On the main Canadian front only guns fitted with air recuperators could safely cover the troops for the whole distance to the first objective, and the main barrage therefore ceased on the outskirts of Marcelcave, a mile in distance and three-quarters of an hour

⁸³ They need not penetrate the old Somme battlefield.

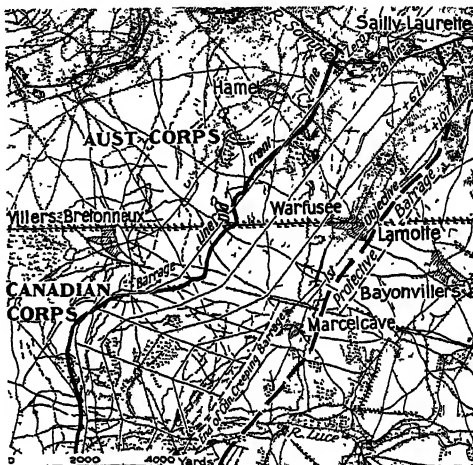
⁸⁴ The heavy artillery firing on this road would use instantaneous fuses so that the shells would explode on the surface and not dig craters.

⁸⁵ Fourth Army records give the total figures as: 18-pounders—998 (Aust. Corps—348, Cdn. Corps—306); 4.5-inch howitzers and 13-pounders—348. Australian records give the number for Aust. Corps as 324. This provided an 18-pounder for every 22 yards of the main front of attack, the density being slightly greater on the Australian front than on the Canadian.

⁸⁶ Or "daisy cutters"—see *Vol. XII, plate 352*.

⁸⁷ The fire would creep forward in 100 yards' lifts, the first two lifts occurring at two-minute intervals, the next eight at three minutes, and the later ones at four minutes, the infantry being thus given more time to fight its way around obstacles as the attack proceeded.

in time before the Australian.⁸⁸ On reaching the first objective the infantry would be covered by a protective barrage, partly of smoke shell, while it dug in and the leap-frogging troops, tanks, and artillery assembled for the next stage. At the same time some of the guns would sweep as far into the German back area as possible in order to prevent the enemy from noticing the halt. It was during this wait that a considerable part of the field artillery, having detached itself immediately on finishing its task in the creeping barrage, would move forward to take its place among the forces advancing in the second stage.⁸⁹



On the Australian front the heavy artillery would continue to cover the infantry during the second stage, its fire advancing at the fastest speed estimated to be possible for the infantry. As soon as the heavy batteries reached the limit of their range, they too would move forward.⁹⁰ From the moment when the second objective was known to have been captured, the field artillery must advance ahead of the Warfusée-Cérise valley, leaving it clear for the heavier batteries.⁹¹

⁸⁸ South of the Luce, however, the barrage would cover the Canadians to the objective. Here, despite the intricacy of the ground, it was found possible to provide an almost straight-line barrage.

⁸⁹ In the Aust. Corps, of the nine field artillery brigades covering each divisional sector during the barrage, three would move up to come under the orders of the brigadiers of the leap-frogging division, and three more, together with a battery of sixty-pounders, would be used by the commander of that division in defending the second objective when taken; the remaining three would become reserve for the corps. The Canadian Corps gave each of its 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Divs. one artillery brigade for close support of the infantry in capturing the first objective and another for the second objective. The leap-frogging division (4th) was given its own artillery. Gen. Currie kept under his own control more of the field artillery than Monash but less of the heavy.

⁹⁰ The 1st Army Troops Coy. A.E., would make trench crossings.

⁹¹ Monash hoped to move his heavies before the Germans could bring up guns to harass their advance.

As the Germans had worked so little on their defences only a third of the heavy artillery would be used in the barrage; at least two-thirds would be employed in silencing all known German batteries, on which a deluge of fire would descend when the attack started.⁹² The British 6-inch guns of modern pattern would be pushed forward early to fire on Chaulnes junction. If they could force the enemy to detrain his reinforcements at Péronne or Nesle, their arrival might be delayed for a day.

In one important respect the artillery plan differed from that of the Hamel fight: there would be no artillery fire to cover the noise of the tanks; till "zero" hour all shelling must appear to be normal. Although many—in the 3rd Division all—field batteries had to be moved forward before the attack in order to gain the necessary range, some of the guns must be left until the last night in the old positions to carry out all defensive shooting. Any necessary registration must be undertaken in accordance with a careful programme so as to be screened by the normal shoots. The contingency most feared was another drenching of Villers-Bretonneux and Bois l'Abbé with mustard gas. If this or any severe bombardment was laid down by the Germans on the last night of preparation, all the heavy artillery of the corps affected was to throw aside concealment and smash the German artillery.⁹³

The rôle of the air force was almost identical with that played by it at Hamel, but the available force was very much greater, the British having 800 machines available for this fight⁹⁴ and the French 1,104.

The main innovation would be the dropping of phosphorus bombs to raise smoke screens.

The cavalry, on the other hand, was cast for a part which,

⁹² In accordance with a trick previously practised elsewhere, if new German battery positions were detected before the battle the artillery would avoid firing on them until the attack started, so that the enemy might be induced to believe that they were undiscovered. As the battle progressed, the counter-battery guns would concentrate upon the enemy's more distant batteries and finally upon his long-range guns.

⁹³ The corps commander was to decide when this step was necessary.

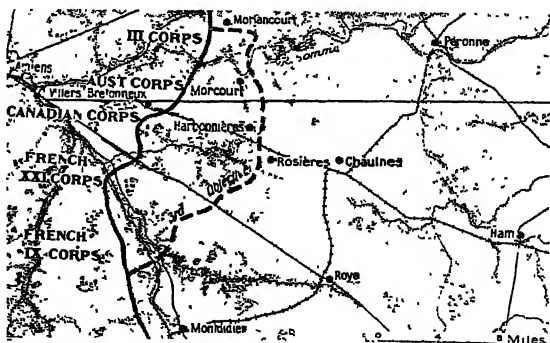
⁹⁴ Not all was in the area (see *The War in the Air*, Vol. VI, pp. 434-5). Each corps of the Fourth Army would have its own squadron whose main duty was to send back information, particularly to keep contact with the advancing infantry. In addition twenty-four squadrons would be in the air—eight of scouts to attack the German aerodromes; four to bomb by night and four by day; two counter-attack squadrons; and most of the remainder to fly low, attack the German infantry, and prevent his artillery from getting away. Parachutes with ammunition would be dropped only for the machine-gun crews at the outer Amiens line.

despite its brief sally amid barbed-wire and shell-holes on the 14th of July, 1916, and the disappointing effort at Cambrai, it had not played on the Western

Cavalry

Front since 1914. After concentrating during the night of the 7th east of Longueau, in the fork of the two Roman roads, its 3rd and 1st Divisions, together with their "whippets," would in the morning advance south of Bois l'Abbé and Marcelcave, following the main Canadian advance. The 3rd Cavalry Division and one battalion of whippets, under orders of the Canadian commander, would try to pass through the infantry at or before the second objective, seize the outer Amiens defences, and hold them until the Canadian infantry came up. The 1st and 2nd Cavalry Divisions, following in that order, would take advantage of any gaps made by the 3rd. Haig insisted that after taking the Amiens defence-line (third objective) Fourth

Army must push towards Chaumes, Roye, and Ham. This duty Rawlinson placed primarily upon the cavalry. Haig was particularly anxious to avoid the mischance



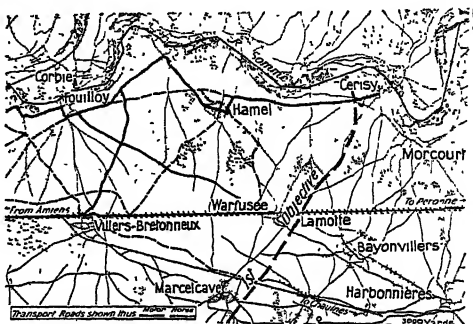
that he believed to have happened at Cambrai—that, when an opening occurred, the cavalry was not there to go through. He therefore on August 5th told Rawlinson to place a brigade of the 1st Cavalry Division and a company of whippets at Monash's disposal also—they would follow the right of the Australian Corps to seize any chance of passing through before the second objective. Monash arranged for unmounted patrols of this brigade (the 1st) to advance with the 5th Division's infantry in order to obtain the earliest possible information of a suitable opening. If none had been found when the second objective was reached, or if one was found earlier on the Canadian front, this cavalry brigade would rejoin its own division.

The cavalry would require the use of the main Roman road, from Amiens to the place of assembly, during the whole night of August 7th. From its assembly ground

Roads

it would move by a track specially made by its own engineers during the night. For the infantry divisions that were to leap-frog also roads would be most important;

Monash, indeed, conceived the problem for his corps on the battle-day as being largely one of roads, and kept the main body of engineers and pioneers of the Australian divisions⁹⁵ and three army troops companies in the hands of his Chief Engineer, Brig.-Genl. Foott, mainly for road-making. He allotted one circuit road for motor traffic, and other roads for horse transport were to be made or cleared—not to be used on any account by the mule trains. Nearly the whole corps light horse regiment (13th) was to be used in traffic control.⁹⁶



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Large reserves of water were accumulated. Every man

Water

carried two waterbottles; thousands of tins were stored at the dumps. Reserve tanks on waggons and lorries were provided as well as extra

Carrying tanks

water-carts.⁹⁷ For the carriage of these and other supplies the divisions relied chiefly on the carrying tanks of which, in the Australian Corps, each leap-frogging division

⁹⁵ Including the 5th, 6th, 9th, 10th, 13th and 15th Fld. Coys., the 1st and 2nd Tunnelling Coys., and the 3rd and 5th Pion. Bns. Each division for the first objective retained one field company, half a battalion of pioneers, and some tunnellers; in each of the leap-frogging divisions this allotment was increased by another field company.

⁹⁶ If the weather was dry light traffic was as far as possible to avoid the roads and move across country; the artillery brigades of the leap-frogging divisions must carry bridges for crossing trenches. One broad-gauge railway had already been repaired to Corbie—where it was hoped to unload trains on the night after the battle—and Canadian railway construction troops would try to have it open to Villers-Bretonneux also.

⁹⁷ It was also hoped to use the wells in Cérisy.

would have nine, and each division for the first objective two.⁹⁸

For communication, on the Australian Corps front two cables were buried to within 1,000-1,200 yards of the starting line,⁹⁹ and the provision included trench- or loop-sets of wireless for each brigade. The sites for headquarters were as far as possible to be arranged beforehand;¹⁰⁰ arrangements for maps, information, and intelligence largely repeated those of Hamel.

Communi- cations

Army conferences

These plans were made at a succession of conferences of which, apart from those with Foch, Haig held two and Rawlinson seven.¹ Monash was at Rawlinson's conference on July 21st, but as the project was then only provisional,² and he had arranged to go to London on leave on July 23rd and to be present at the opening of Australia House by the King and Queen on August 3rd, Rawlinson permitted him to depart on the understanding that he should keep in touch with the War Office and return to France at once if required.³ Before leaving, Monash thrashed out with Brig.-Genl. Blamey the main plan for the corps, which largely repeated that of Hamel, and certain other matters that must be settled early—the relief of the 5th Division by the III Corps; the inner boundaries of his divisions in the attack; the allotment of artillery for each stage; the moving

⁹⁸ Monash counted each tank as equivalent to a fatigue party of 200 men. Each division, however, also arranged for a train of pack-mules to bring up supplies by specially made tracks.

⁹⁹ Between July 25 and 30 the 26th Bn., for example, had 100-200 men working nightly on this.

¹⁰⁰ Gen. Gellibrand (3rd Div.) ordered that H.Q.'s should be sited preferably where operations could be seen; they must also be closer to the troops than in stationary warfare. Regimental leaders should not be brought away from their troops for conferences, unless absolutely necessary. Gen. MacLagan insisted strongly that a party should be left at all old headquarters to direct messengers or callers to any new ones.

¹ Haig conferred with Rawlinson on July 17 and with Rawlinson, Debeney, and Kavanagh (Cavalry Corps) on August 5; Rawlinson conferred with Currie, Monash, and Tank Corps on July 21; with Hobbs (Aust. Corps) and Blamey (B.G.G.S., Aust. Corps) on July 25; with Butler (III Corps) and Br.-Gen. Webber (Cdn. Corps) on 26th; with Debeney and Davidson (G.H.Q.) on 27th; with Butler, Currie, and Hobbs on the 29th; with the Tank Brigade commanders, and later with Kavanagh, on the 30th; and finally with Currie, Monash, Butler, Kavanagh, Elles (Tank Corps), and others on Aug. 6. The chief general staff officer of each commander almost always attended with him, and sometimes the chief of his artillery, but only once was an administrative officer (of the Tank Corps) present.

² Haig had suggested it to Foch.

³ Monash says in his *Letters*: "A destroyer would stand by at Dover to rush me across, if necessary." As things happened, this was not required.

up of the guns; the "mopping-up" of the ground in the river bends that would be missed in a direct advance; and the employment of his engineer forces in preparation. Then, leaving Maj.-General Hobbs in command, he went to London. Late on July 28th, the expected message reached him. He returned to Bertangles on the evening of the 30th. "I have all the threads of the operations in my hands," he said next day to Haig, who called in.⁴

That day Monash in conference laid open the scheme to his divisional commanders, and asked for their plans. Questions raised by them were answered in a memorandum on August 1st. Monash's arrangements for the corps were conveyed chiefly in a series of twenty-one "Battle Instructions," amplifying and passing on instructions from Fourth Army. On August 4th, after studying the divisional commanders' orders, he held a larger conference, explaining in his masterly manner every stage and giving final decisions.

**Corps
conferences**

How well justified were Foch's fears that Rawlinson was too closely limiting his advance is well shown in Monash's orders. In the memorandum of August 1st he wrote:

**The
question of
a limit**

There is no intention of carrying the exploitation of the success eastward of the Blue Line (the third objective).⁵

On the morning of August 5th, when telling the Official War Correspondent of the scheme, he said that the important question had been

whether they should go for railways or for guns. There is one important railway in front of them and only one—the junction at Chaulnes. This supplies the Germans in the Montdidier salient. Monash decided to go only for guns and leave this junction to be dealt with by our guns. When (and if) we get far enough, our guns will concentrate upon it and try to make the place impossible—which may help to drive the Germans out of the Montdidier salient. At the same time there will be a further effort to turn the Montdidier salient by cavalry. . . .

I asked M. (says the correspondent's diary) if his objective was to be unlimited. "Strictly limited," he said. He had warned Lawrence

⁴ Haig spoke to Monash on this occasion also of his intention to probe and press on with cavalry. Monash said that his own light horse were not well enough trained for this task.

⁵ Presumably, however, Monash spoke only of his own front, and it was through the Canadians that the cavalry would mostly pass. Canadian orders of Aug. 3 mentioned the need for the infantry to reach the third objective early, as the cavalry after capturing it was required to go on.

that if he wanted to exploit this success he must have the troops already there beforehand and all arrangements made. . . . Lawrence said that it had been decided on no account to go beyond the objective. They are going for the enemy's guns. They are not to trouble about the (German) infantry in a few villages on the edge of the old Somme battlefield, and they do not intend on any account to get on to the old Somme battlefield themselves. . . .

I asked Monash why they didn't think of exploiting success if they achieved it. He said "They don't want to dissipate the Australians." He only knows of this decision as far as our own front is concerned. He had obtained a promise from Gen. Lawrence that, if the affair goes well, the Corps will be drawn out of the line for a spell.

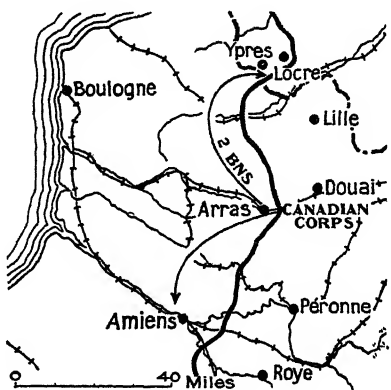
Next day, after Haig's visit, Rawlinson called together his corps commanders in order to impress on them that the offensive was to be unlimited. But it was only the Canadian Corps "reinforced, if necessary, by further divisions" and the French on their right that were to push on after the cavalry towards Chaulnes and Roye—the Australian Corps would then merely form a flank, and swing forward its right to keep touch with the Canadians. But till this juncture, as has already been noted, the only reserve division promised to Fourth Army was the 1st Australian,⁶ which would begin to arrive from Flanders on August 6th, and had been allotted as reserve to the Australian Corps. It was now that Haig made available the 17th, 32nd and 63rd Divisions. They would be moved up on August 8th, the 32nd behind the Canadian Corps, the 17th behind the Australians, and the 63rd (Royal Naval) behind III Corps. During the day of the attack the 1st Australian Division would be brought up by Monash to Aubigny and Hamel. What he would then do with it depended on whether the Canadian Corps continued the advance towards Chaulnes.

The force to be concentrated for the British offensive was not a very great one. Counting the 12th Division, which would make a separate minor attack between Morlancourt and Ville, only eleven divisions would attack on the Fourth Army's front, with another four in

Secrecy

⁶ Rawlinson had asked for this division in his first proposal to Haig on July 16. Two divisions, 12th and 18th, in the III Corps area, but earmarked for general reserve, were allotted to III Corps at the end of July. (These were the two divisions that Lawrence had placed south of Amiens at Foch's request on July 12.) But the 18th would attack on the Morlancourt ridge and the 12th would carry out a small separate operation between Ville and Morlancourt at the same time. The 33rd Amer. Div. would be in III Corps area, but was not to be used except in emergency.

reserve.⁷ Nevertheless the movement from Arras and Flanders of four Canadian divisions and one Australian and of 1,000 guns, would have to be carefully hidden if news of it was not to reach the enemy. It was realised that the appearance of the Canadian Corps on this new front would certainly cause the attack to be expected.⁸ G.H.Q. therefore ordered on July 27th that the location of the Canadian Corps was to be especially concealed. The concentration was accordingly effected in the shortest possible time, the Canadian infantry starting southwards only on July 30th. To deceive the enemy, on July 29th one battalion from each of the 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions⁹ was sent northwards to the Second Army's front, at Loche and La Clytte in Flanders, with orders to prepare for an offensive there by their divisions. These troops held the trenches from August 1st



to 4th and patrolled No-Man's Land; but it was not often that Germans captured patrols of oversea troops and, as the Canadian uniforms were similar to the British, their presence appears to have been unnoticed by the enemy. Two Canadian casualty clearing stations and several Canadian wireless units also were sent to Second Army. Whether the German Intelligence reported them there is no evidence in Australia to show, but at least the Canadians themselves and British and French onlookers were deceived. From Foch and Haig downwards most commanders carefully withheld information from each subordinate until the latest possible moment. Thus the

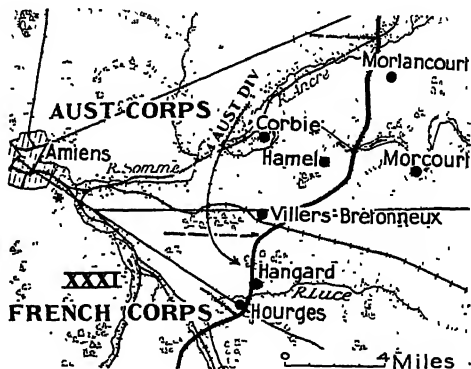
⁷ On the French front on Aug. 8th 5 divisions would attack with 2 more in reserve. On Aug. 9th 4 more French divisions with one in reserve would join in. On the 10th the Third French Army would attack with 7 more and 3 or 4 in reserve. The total attacking force would then be, on Aug. 8th 16 divisions; Aug. 9th, probably 22; Aug. 10th, about 30.

⁸ The recent appearance of the 1st and 4th Cdn. Divs. on the First Army's front had caused this result there.

⁹ The 27th Cdn. Inf. Bn., and the 4th Cdn. Mtd. Rifles.

corps commanders and the chiefs of their staffs were not told until July 22nd, and divisional commanders on the 31st, and so forth. Lawrence, Montgomery, and other staff officers in the know, so worded their orders that the moves would seem to have other explanations.¹⁰

Rawlinson's original proposal to Haig had contained one glaring defect: the Canadian Corps was to have taken over the French line as far as Morisel some days before the attack. Haig, well realising that this would divulge his plan to the enemy,¹¹ asked (in his memorandum to Foch on July 22nd) that the French should hold that front until the attack and then allow the Canadians to pass through them. Monash states that several methods were discussed at Rawlinson's conference on the 21st, and that it was then that the plan was adopted of using the 4th Australian Division, then out of the line, to hold all the front to be taken over from the French.¹²



This clever solution more than met the difficulties, for if the Germans discovered the change they would naturally assume that there was no intention of attack on the Australian front (or why should it be far extended?), and that the French line was being shortened in order to enable Pétain to pull out divisions for use at Soissons. It would deceive the French troops; and the men of the 4th Australian Division themselves, and other Australians, would

¹⁰ Thus on July 27, when it became necessary to prepare for the dumping of 600 rounds of ammunition at the position of each field-gun, Br.-Gen. Blamey's order for the Australian divisional staffs began: "It has been represented that, in view of the wet weather and the reduced artillery on the corps front, it is desirable that a greater amount of ammunition should be available at the guns than has been permitted before. The Corps Commander approves of this."

¹¹ The comments of Crown Prince Rupprecht and of Gen. von Kuhl on the Canadian Corps offer abundant grounds for this statement.

¹² If this recommendation was made on the 21st and Haig's memorandum was written next day the recommendation must have been unusually slow in reaching him.

imagine that it meant a continuance of their defensive rôle and a postponement of their long anticipated rest. By an order of the Fourth Army the following explanation was to be given to those Australians who had to know:

The French, owing to casualties in the Soissons offensive, have shortened their line and the British have side-slipped south. The Canadians are taking the place of the XXII Corps—which went south—in support of the junction between the French and British. It is expected that the Canadians will relieve us in the line later and that we shall take their place.¹³

The coming event was "not to be hinted or discussed in the presence or hearing of anyone not in the know," especially mess orderlies, chauffeurs, and interpreters.¹⁴

These measures were extraordinarily successful. The shifting southward of the Fourth Army's boundary, ordered on July 23rd, the relief of the 5th Australian Division on the nights of July 31st and August 1st by the III Corps, ordered on July 27th, and the transfer of the 4th Australian Division (previously ordered to relieve the 5th),¹⁵ to take over four miles of the French line on the other flank of the corps, were universally taken as mere routine matters—by the Australians as an interesting, if rather disappointing, change. The "Diggers" were at the moment concerned with a fresh minor offensive on Morlancourt ridge, presently to be described, and with the famous race meeting of the 4th Australian Division at Allonville landing ground.¹⁶

From July 26th to August 5th there took place a third event of great interest for the Australians concerned—the attachment of the 65th American Brigade (33rd Division) to the Australian Corps for service in the front line. On July 26th and 27th two battalions of the 129th American Regiment joined the 2nd Australian Division in the Villers-Bretonneux sector and a

**Americans
in
line**

¹³ Before this, to explain the presence of Canadian officers, Blamey had issued a memorandum that parties of them would be spectators at practices to be carried out with the tanks at Vaux-en-Amienois on July 29 and 30.

¹⁴ Quoted from an order of Gen. Wisdom, acting G.O.C., 2nd Aust. Div.

¹⁵ This order was given on July 24 and countermanded the same night without any reason being furnished.

¹⁶ With the "Polygon Wood Jump," "Pozières Stakes," and "Mule Sprint and Steeple." "At the conclusion," says the war diary of the 12th Bde., "a most wonderful flying exhibition was given by an officer of the Australian Flying Corps." Those spectators who barely escaped decapitation will find in this an example of Attic understatement. Twenty aeroplanes, including visitors from Nos. 2 and 4 Aust. Sqns. in the north, landed on the ground during the afternoon.

battalion each of the 129th and 130th joined the 3rd Division in the Hamel sector—one American battalion and one machine-gun company being allotted to each brigade in the front line.¹⁷ So far as the troops of either country knew, the programme would be peacefully worked out during the next six weeks. On July 28th an Australian visiting the 2nd Division at Villers-Bretonneux, noted:

All along the line that day we found Americans. . . . They had just been drafted up the previous night into the line—a company¹⁸ to each of the battalions of the 6th Bde. . . . Maj. Ellwood told us the 24th Bn. was 193 strong.¹⁹ The American company which came in to reinforce them was 198 strong, so that more than half of the men in that sector were now Americans. It had cheered our men tremendously to have these Americans amongst them. We saw them sitting together and having their tucker—in one place they had a comfortable little shelter dug into the side of the trench, with a table in the middle and a wooden seat all round like an arbour in a tea-garden. The floor of the trench was water—a lake. But they all had their legs up resting on the table legs or elsewhere above the water and were enjoying their dinner—two Australians and one American.

The diary of the 10th Brigade (3rd Division) says that the men of the 1st Battalion, 129th Regiment, "have proved exceptionally keen and willing to learn and are loth to leave the line at the end of their tour." On July 29th the remaining two battalions of the 130th Regiment were to move to Querrieu Wood and Bois de Mai to be attached to the 4th Australian Division.

But on that day came a complete surprise to all the troops—an order that the 4th Australian Division should relieve the XXXI French Corps as far as a new southern boundary for the Australian Corps. Accordingly on the nights of August 1st and 2nd it relieved the 37th and part of the 74th French Divisions.²⁰ Its northern brigade (4th) subsequently extended northwards to take over from the 2nd Australian Division the

¹⁷ Small parties had already been visiting the line in the "A" stage of American training (for example, Lt. T. O. Aarvig with four American scouts had been out with patrols of the 56th Bn. on the Morlancourt heights). The "B" stage had now been entered on: one American company went to each Australian battalion. For eight days the Americans were to be distributed one section to each Australian platoon; later one platoon to each company; finally a battalion to each brigade. In the "C" stage, which was reached in the III Corps, American regiments were to be put into the line complete.

¹⁸ Of the 3rd Bn., 129th Regt., U.S. Infantry.

¹⁹ This, of course, would be the trench strength after a number of detached officers and men as well as nucleus, transport, and so forth had been deducted.

²⁰ To simplify the relief the French had arranged for the whole of this front to be held by the 2nd Regt. of Tirailleurs.

front as far as the railway. The southern brigade (13th) had its right south of the Luce at Hourges.

When these trenches were held by the French nothing had stirred there in daylight; but Australian troops never could keep their presence a secret from the enemy—they were far too careless of being shot at. Some of the 49th Battalion found an old dump of rifle-grenades and pestered the enemy with them. Other men hunted among the *débris* of Cachy and Domart for galvanised iron and timber for shelters. The Germans noted the change and tried to probe the 15th Battalion by day but were driven off. At 3.5 a.m. on August 4th, however, after sharply bombarding the outposts of the 51st Battalion (W.A.) astride the Amiens-Roye road at Hourges, they raided the ruins there. The posts killed ten Germans and captured one, mortally wounded,²¹ but the raiders effected their purpose, carrying off a sergeant and four men. On the British side there was consternation among commanders and staffs: what did these men know? The first arrivals of Canadian artillery—the 8th Canadian (Army) Brigade and the artillery of the 5th Canadian Division²²—were already behind the 4th Australian Division. On the next night (August 4th-5th) two Canadian infantry brigades were to take over the support area. Had the captured men heard of this? A comforting report arrived that, shortly before, they had been discussing the prospect of a long stay in the trenches. It was certain that if the Germans learned of the coming attack they would raid in other places the next night.

But that night passed as eventless as most others. It was clear that the secret was intact.

Documents captured in the following week showed that the raid was made by four parties (each about 25 strong) of the I/373rd I.R. (225th Divn.). One party found a post of seven Australians who fought it with rifles and bombs. Four of the Germans crept behind the post, shot an Australian and captured four. These (said the German account) had to be dragged from the post; they threw themselves on the ground and the German N.C.O. had to shoot one, lightly wounding him, before they could be brought in. Another post was captured in the same way. All parties met rough and tumble fighting. The prisoners gave "a good, soldierly impression," though most had been only a short

²¹ The 51st lost 3 killed, 9 (including 3 officers) wounded, and 6 missing.

²² The 5th Cdn. Div. had been formed but was broken up without being sent to the front. Its artillery, however, went to France.

time with their battalion. The sergeant "refused to make any military statement, and could not be shaken in his resolve by any means employed." As to the others, "whether their statements are pretence or truth there is no means of proving; all were reticent and only after a lot of talking to did their tongues become loose."

But the raid caused one change in the plans. The two Canadian brigades from support were to have finally relieved the 4th Division in the front line on the night of August 6th; but, lest the Germans might now raid again and find that the Canadians had replaced the Australians and so guess the whole plan, Rawlinson decided to leave the 13th Australian Brigade occupying the whole Canadian front under Canadian Corps until the final night.²³ As this meant that it could not play the important part of reserve brigade for its division in the attack south of the Somme, Monash arranged with Rawlinson that the 1st Brigade of the 1st Division, specially hurried forward on arrival from Flanders, should take its place.

During the first week of August troops poured into the Fourth Army's back area, close outside the east and north of Amiens, and thence into the area behind the fighting line—all movement being ordered to take place at night. First, beginning on July 30th, heavy artillery brigades and a certain number of field artillery ones with their endless ammunition columns; then, beginning on the night of August 2nd, Canadian infantry divisions also, by 'bus as well as train, the journey being short. Lastly, tanks and cavalry—sure sign of an offensive. It had been decided that the batteries should not have emplacements dug for them since these might be detected by German airmen; the guns were simply placed in the open²⁴ with ammunition stacked in the fields beside them, covered with cut crop,²⁵ the guns being netted over with camouflage. At this crucial moment camouflage ran short, but the batteries used netting entwined with handfuls of grass or wheat. The Americans in the Australian line were withdrawn on the evening of the 6th. By Rawlinson's order aeroplanes were sent up

²³ The 13th Bde. with some 1,500 rifles in the forward area took over this 7,500 yards' sector on the night of Aug. 5. Gen. Currie took command of the 4th Div.'s front at 10 a.m. on the 5th. A Canadian engineer officer with his sergeant went through the 49th Bn. on the night of the 6th to peg the starting line and was shot in No-Man's Land but got back to the Australian posts.

²⁴ This was in accordance with the plan formulated in May.

²⁵ For photograph see Vol. XII, plate 508.

to keep watch on the British area for any signs that might betray the attack.²⁶ But at this stage the weather, which precisely a year before, during the Ypres offensive, almost seemed to be controlled by a power hostile to the Allies, became exceedingly favourable. After a hot day on August 1st it broke and, except for a sunny afternoon on the 3rd, remained wet and unsuitable for flying or seeing until after two heavy rain-storms on the 6th. Even on the 7th the low, drifting clouds were sufficient to prevent the Australian Corps air squadron from directing artillery fire. Transport moving in the 3rd Division's area was shelled on August 4th but the enemy's attitude was entirely normal and it was evident he had not discovered the project. How well the secret was kept *in staff circles* at the front is shown by the diary of the Australian Official War Correspondent, who was not "in it." On the afternoon of August 3rd he noticed Canadian lorries on the road south of Doullens and was told by a friend, who had seen many others west of Amiens, that they were making journeys with ammunition but the drivers "didn't know themselves where they were going." On the night of the 4th he was puzzled by a remark of someone in the general staff office at corps headquarters—"they won't spot the Canadians." Also a letter from another friend, convalescent in London, said

that officers of our 3rd Divn. have written to friends in hospital there and told them of what was coming off, and all sorts of hints as to details. . . . Anyway (continues the diary), I had no idea what was coming off. I came back from the general staff office putting all these things together and realising that there was an attack in the immediate future in which the Canadians and some of our troops were involved. I found in our tent Wilkins,²⁷ who had just come back from a tour round the line of the 3rd Divn. He asked me if I had heard of the attack. Everyone up there at the front was full of it. On Wednesday night they were to attack and go as far as they could—Bapaume, they spoke of; and the Canadians were in it, and the British north of the Somme as far as Albert and the French 50 miles south. . . . One officer told him that they were going through this time. The same officer was talking to his men more freely than to Wilkins. They asked him, "Where are we going to, Mr. ———? Berlin?" "Well, you always complain about being stopped," the officer said. "You are being given the chance this time of showing what you can really do. It's the right

²⁶ Unless carefully carried out, this was liable to arouse suspicion; the British intelligence had, at least once, interpreted such action by German airmen as sign of a coming offensive.

²⁷ Later Sir Hubert Wilkins, then Australian Official Photographer,

way to tackle the job." (Tunnellers were up there making a deep dressing station and three advanced brigade headquarters. They said there would be someone in them "the night after to-morrow.")

On August 4th, therefore, the news was fast spreading. As for traffic the same diary records on August 7th:

Gullett²⁸ told me that up to yesterday the Villers-Bretonneux road was packed with traffic like the Strand when the omnibuses are blocked there; he was thankful that there was so much mist and rain. By to-day the traffic was mostly over.

The incident that caused most serious risk of detection, however, has still to be told.

It happened that a few hours before the conference of July 21st Monash had provisionally approved of a plan to seize the Brick Beacon crest south of Morlancourt by advancing another 500 yards on a 2,500 yards' front astride of that ridge.²⁹ But though the advance would deprive the Germans of good observation posts during the preparations for the suggested offensive, Rawlinson for the moment withheld approval. Monash went to London. During his absence, on July 25th, at a conference with Hobbs and Blamey concerning the taking over of this front by the III Corps, Rawlinson agreed that before being relieved the 5th Division should make this attack.

The advance would be from the trench-line seized by the 7th Brigade on June 10th to the two trenches which the Germans had since been trying to dig along the next cross-spurs. The III Corps with its 58th Division took over on July 28th the northern half of the 8th Australian Brigade's line, from opposite Dernancourt to the valley-side south of Ville, thus allowing the 8th Brigade to concentrate its forward battalions, 32nd and 29th, on the main front of the attack,³⁰ 2,500 yards in width. The 53rd Battalion (14th Brigade) would extend the front of attack for another 1,000 yards on the southern slope, north of Sailly-Laurette. There was not enough artillery effec-

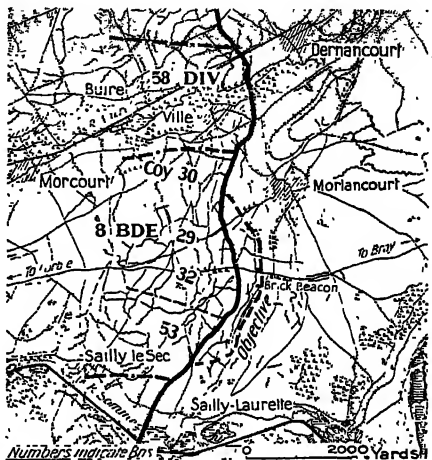
²⁸ Lt. S. W. Gullett, 29th Bn., then of the Aust. War Records Section.

²⁹ It will be remembered that Monash had asked Hobbs to prepare such a plan, and that the battalion commanders strongly preferred—in that sector—an outright attack to Peaceful Penetration (see pp. 342, 381). This project was the result.

³⁰ The attack was originally to have been made by a battalion of the 8th Bde. north of the Bray-Corbic road and one of the 14th Bde. south of it.

tively to cover an assault over this exposed ground on so wide a front, and the advance of the 8th Brigade would therefore take place first, half an hour after midnight on July 29th-30th, part of the artillery turning afterwards to the front of the 53rd.³¹ The 30th Battalion would place a company in the old front line behind the 29th and another behind the 32nd—these being used half for carrying and half for reserve. A third company of the 30th would be in support while the fourth held the brigade's front beyond the left of the attack. Five communication trenches must be put through to the new front in the short interval between its capture and day-break, four by the 5th Pioneers and one by the 56th Battalion. For three of these, "Russian saps" had been tunnelled out part of the way. Careful preparations were made for connection by laddered telephone lines and other means, for the use of trench-mortars and machine-guns, the pushing forward of posts and patrols, and the hurrying of hot food to the weary men after the action.

But for three days beforehand the weather was miserably wet. The night of the 27th was occupied by a double relief, the 29th Battalion first being relieved by the 30th and then itself relieving part of the 32nd. On July 28th heavy rain fell shortly after dawn and again at 3.45 in the afternoon,



³¹ The first barrage would last for forty minutes; the second would follow after fifteen minutes' silence. The supporting field artillery consisted of two groups: *Left Group* (Lt.-Col. F. P. Derham)—5th (Army) Bde., R.H.A. (lent by 58th Div.), 13th and 14th Bdes., A.F.A., and 3rd (Army) Bde., A.F.A., less two 18-pounder batteries. *Right Group* (Lt.-Col. T. I. C. Williams)—10th and 11th Bdes., A.F.A., two 18-pounder batteries of 3rd (Army) Bde., A.F.A., and 23rd (Army) Bde., R.F.A. Diverting bombardments would be laid down south of the Somme, and the 33rd Bn. immediately north of the river, would fire on known German trench-mortars and machine-guns with some of its own. The deep valley south of the Beacon would also be bombarded for forty minutes by the 6-inch Newton mortars.

drenching the sticky yellow clay of the trenches. Yet the carrying parties came up, and the troops were on their tapes an hour before the start; and, when the guns started, the 32nd and 29th went forward overflowing with confidence. Each attacked with three companies in line.³² The night was very dark and at first the shell-smoke rendered landmarks most difficult to see. As the German outposts were reached on the 29th's front, some of their garrisons ran towards the Victorians with hands above their heads, to be directed to the rear as prisoners. Others made a stand and there was even some bayonet fighting, but the elements of trench were quickly taken. The first wave stayed to clear them but the second passed straight through. Three hundred yards farther on, when the Germans in the second trench sighted the approaching "Diggers," most of them fled. A few fought; others would not leave their dugouts and were killed. One platoon of each attacking company had been ordered to push beyond the final objective and gain additional ground if the chance occurred. Some of these troops under Lieut. Downes³³ and other leaders went on another 200-300 yards and found a third trench; in parts its garrison had been disorganised by the inrush of fugitives from the front. The protective barrage of the Australian guns falling on it, however, made its occupation impossible, and these troops fell back, first clear of the barrage, and eventually, about dawn, to the second trench, the main objective.

The northern end of the objective lay on a knuckle protruding into the Morlancourt pan and looking down on the village. A chain of posts was duly placed across it.³⁴

South of the Bray-Corbie road the 32nd (S.A. and W.A.),

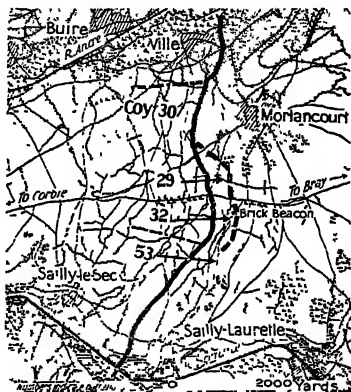
³² The average front of a company was 400 yards. The 29th attacked in two lines, the 32nd in three. The average density of each line would therefore be one man to every 10-15 yards.

³³ Lt. R. F. A. Downes, M.C.; 29th Bn. Orchardist, of Camden, N.S.W.; b. Camden, 23 Jan. 1886.

³⁴ This was to be done by the remaining company of the 29th under Capt. A. J. Ainslie (Launceston, Tas.). Two platoons were to place the posts connecting with the old front farther north. A third was to move through the flank on the knuckle and probe a communication trench leading towards the village. The smoke and dust of the barrage at first hid all landmarks, and the company made too far southward; but the exploiting platoon built a block in the communication trench and the flank posts were established. On the night of July 30 Lt. W. Braden (North Brighton, Vic.; killed in action, 9 Aug. 1918) took a small patrol 100 yards down the communication trench where he came upon a roughly built barricade. It was garrisoned, and after bombing the post he withdrew.

which in the three minutes allowed for doing so had got within fifty yards of its covering barrage, immediately took the first trench, capturing 25 prisoners and 4 machine-guns. The second trench, here close behind the first, was rushed within ten minutes from the start, and the troops captured a string of German posts beyond. The advancing line had split and a dangerous gap existed, but Lieut. Trimmer,³⁵ locating Germans in this, cleared them out, capturing twelve.³⁶ Many prisoners had been taken and strong patrols brought in a few more.

The 32nd had advanced and as the 53rd was not due to come up for three-quarters of an hour a gap existed between them. The support company of the 32nd, under Capt. Allen,³⁷ was pivoting to form a defensive flank when thirty Germans appeared in this gap and attacked from the rear the flank of the 32nd. Allen, leading a small party, quickly cleared them out, killing or wounding 10 and capturing 15 and a machine-gun. The commander of the 30th's company supporting the 32nd also moved two platoons into the gap. When, at 1.25, the second barrage descended, the 53rd (N.S.W.) advanced so close upon it that the enemy had no chance to resist. Although the German front line was a good trench protected by some barbed concertina wire, this proved no obstacle. Many Germans fled, the Lewis gunners shooting at them from the hip. The second-wave company mopped-up while the two leading ones went on to the final objective, some unconnected lines of rifle-pits.



The German infantry had resisted only at a few points;

³⁵ Lt. D. Trimmer, M.C.; 32nd Bn. Company manager; of St. Peters, S.A.; b. Tanunda, S.A., 28 May 1888.

³⁶ He also with three men captured a troublesome trench-mortar near the third German line. After killing or capturing all the crew he fired 200 shells from it on the enemy.

³⁷ Capt. J. H. Allen, M.C.; 32nd Bn. Clerk; of Keswick, S.A.; b. Keswick, 23 Nov. 1888.

subsequent interrogation showed that officers and men alike were greatly depressed by the result of Foch's counterstroke—especially by the consideration that the French, whom they had believed to be exhausted, had been able to stage so successful an offensive.³⁸ The officers had possibly also heard of the coming withdrawal across the Ancre of which the history of the neighbouring 247th R.I.R. says: "It was clear . . . that the defensive now began, without any hope of ultimate victory." The rank and file were mostly young and obviously pleased to be captured, especially when the "Diggers" after the first bloody fierceness of the assault gave them hot cocoa, biscuits, and chocolate at the little Y.M.C.A. canteen next to headquarters of the 53rd.

I don't think there is much use in preaching mercy to my men (reported Lt.-Col. McArthur of the 29th). They fight to kill if the enemy shows resistance, but are extremely kind to prisoners when captured.

Three small counter-attacks were reported—all easily repelled. On the left twenty-five Germans were seen approaching. The Victorians let them come to within 100 yards when two Lewis guns stopped all movement there. Three of the Australian communication trenches had been duly dug, though two were but shallow.³⁹ Lieut.-Col. McArthur, going his rounds at day-break, found the company commanders re-organising their sectors "and all ranks cheerful and alert"; and though the German artillery shot incessantly that day and the next, and enemy snipers at first made movement on the left impossible by daylight, the whole objective was firmly held.⁴⁰

The Australian casualties, including those caused by the

³⁸ Whether they knew of the Americans' part is uncertain.

³⁹ Of the 5th Pioneers Lt. S. A. Hill (Perth, W.A.) and his platoon had by 4.10 a.m. dug their communication trench 3 feet deep; Capt. W. Buchan (Pymont, N.S.W.) and 81 men could not start until 2.15 owing to the "back lash" of the German artillery following the 53rd Bn.'s attack, but by 4 a.m. they had dug 200 yards 3 ft. 6in. deep connecting with an old German sap. A third party, caught in the German barrage, could not find the Russian sap, and did no work but accomplished the task on the following night. The fourth party finished 170 yards out of 270 on the first night and completed the trench next night. The pioneers lost 7 killed and 9 wounded. The 56th Bn. party, consisting of Lt. L. P. Cosgrove (Sydney) and 60 others, completed a good trench 130 yards long, only one man being wounded.

⁴⁰ In the Australian War Memorial at Canberra is the uniform of a man who fought in this attack, with the Somme mud still caked upon it.

next two days' shelling were 266;⁴¹ of the Germans 4 officers and 124 others, with 36 machine-guns, were captured.

A report apparently of the Second German Army shows that the attack fell upon the junction of the 54th and XI German Corps, involving the south flank (232nd R.I.R.) of the 107th Divn., and the north flank (203rd R.I.R.) of the 43rd Res. Divn. Only five days earlier the 107th Divn. had received the general order to enlarge its forward zone by withdrawing the main line of resistance to a third trench, the old main line then becoming the rear line of the forward zone. The forward garrison had been reduced to one-third of each front-line company—that is, to about twelve rifles—the rest of the company being kept in the new main line.

The I and III Bns. of the 232nd R.I.R. received the chief shock, and their new main line was evidently the "third trench" reached by a few of the 8th Bde. The history of the 232nd says that these parties were cleared by an immediate counter-attack by a support company and the supports of the forward companies. "We climbed out of the communication trench," says Lt. Roth, "and took front against the nearest machine-gun nest. I and others pulled the strings of our bombs and showered them on the nest. Then we charged with a cheer. At first the English still shot at us, but soon they gave it up and fled, taking their machine-gun with them and leaving only Lewis gun drums and a few articles and rations." The same history records a similar counter-attack on either side of the Bray-Corbie road where the Australian advanced posts also withdrew. The 232nd lost 149 officers and men, and the 203rd probably about 100.

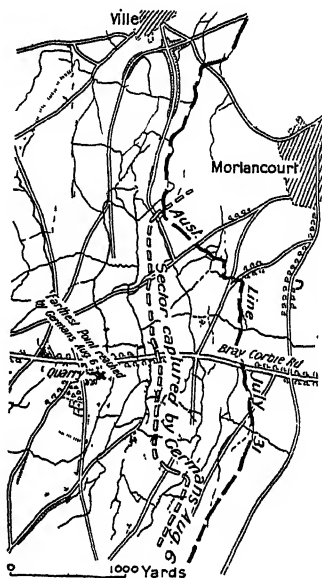
"It was realised," says the Second Army's report, "that only an organised counter-attack could with advantage be planned against the brave and stubborn enemy opposite." It was nevertheless recognised that if this enemy was left on the high ground astride the Bray-Corbie road he might force a gradual withdrawal of the lines between the Ancre and the Somme. The Australian machine-guns were already making themselves felt in positions in rear. A battalion of infantry from reserve and reinforcements of artillery were allotted to each of the two regiments that had been driven back, and the making of a powerful counter-attack was considered.

Meanwhile on the British side on the nights of July 30th and 31st the III Corps with its 18th Division from reserve took over this front and also part of the 3rd Australian Division's line down to the Somme. Preparations for the Fourth Army's offensive were now hastened by the III Corps, batteries and ammunition being brought up during the dark. On the

⁴¹ The details were:

| <i>8th Brigade</i> | | O.R. | <i>14th Brigade</i> | | O.R. |
|--------------------|--------|-----------------|---------------------|--------|------|
| | Offrs. | | | Offrs. | |
| 29th Bn. | 2 | 105 | 53rd Bn. | 3 | 39 |
| 30th Bn. | - | 21 | 56th Bn. | - | 2 |
| 32nd Bn. | 2 | 69 | | | |
| 8th L.T.M. Bty. | - | 7 | | | |
| | | 5th Pioneer Bn. | 16 O.R. | | |

night of August 5th the concentration of infantry began, the 58th Division coming in to take over the southern half of the 18th Division's front near Sailly-le-Sec, from which the 58th with two brigades (one to leap-frog at the first objective) would attack.⁴² At 4 a.m. on the 6th, while this relief, a most tiring one, was still in progress, a severe bombardment from German trench-mortars and artillery fell on its whole area.⁴³ For some time, as no news arrived, headquarters hoped that no attack had taken place, but some hours later came the alarming report that at 5 o'clock Germans had been seen 1,500 yards within the British lines, actually at the quarry at which the 34th Australian Battalion started its peaceful penetration on the night of May 4th. In this ground were dumps of ammunition ready for the great attack, and among the British troops captured, whose number was as yet unknown, were one or two of the 50th Division's artillery, who had been in charge of these.



The attack had happened when the leading company of the 8th London Regiment, coming in to relieve the 2nd Bedfordshire (which itself was then to have relieved the 8th East Surrey), was stuck in the trenches, deep in mud, 600 yards from the front line. The 8th East Surrey were overrun, but these battalions quickly cleared out the Germans that penetrated deepest, and, the 6th Northamptonshire immediately counter-

⁴² To give them a straight run at their objective, the village of Sailly-Laurette would be assaulted by a battalion (2/10th London) of a third brigade. The 18th Div., also employing two brigades, would be attacking astride of the Bray-Corbie road.

⁴³ Part of this bombardment fell on the Somme flats at Vaire where the 4th A.I. Bde. was already in bivouac ready for its march to the assembly point on the night of the 7th. Helping a wounded man to shelter, Lt.-Col. T. P. McSharry, young veteran of Quinn's Post, was killed. His adjutant, Lt. T. B. Heffer (Mosman, N.S.W.) and Intell. Officer, Lt. W. J. Hines (Zeehan, Tas.) were among forty others killed or wounded.



THE ATTACK BY AUSTRALIAN CORPS, 8TH AUGUST 1918

The map shows diagrammatically the Australian divisions that advanced in the several stages. British trenches, formations and objectives are printed in red, German in blue (German regiments are indicated by their numbers).

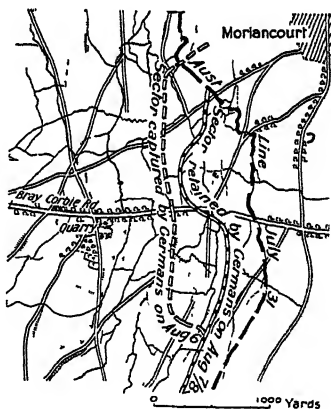
Light contours 5 metres, dark 20 metres.

attacking, by 8 a.m. the old Australian trenches, as held *before* the 5th Division's last attack, had been regained except for portion of the old front line and some saps leading out of it.

It was clear that, apart from the information that might leak out, the loss of these trenches must imperil the attack of the III Corps and, consequently, that of the Australians. With Haig's approval Rawlinson informed General Butler of the III Corps that for him the battle had already begun; he was to make sure of covering the Australian flank by taking Chipilly Spur in the great battle. It was decided that, before the launching of the offensive, it would suffice to recapture the front held before the last attack.

I have made such an outcry on this point (said Monash on Aug. 7) that Butler has been told that he must keep on the battle and go on attacking all day (8th) if necessary till he takes it.

Accordingly, at 4.30 a.m. on the 7th, this was again attempted. The assault met a German one, and all day there continued attacks and counter-attacks up and down trenches and saps in the small section of the objective still in German hands. Brig.-Genl. Sadleir-Jackson⁴⁴ endeavoured to organise another formal counter-attack eventually timed for 9 p.m. Meanwhile, however, with vast responsibility lying on them, two young British officers in the thick of the fight, Lieuts. F. A. Leatherland and Wixcey,⁴⁵ of the 11th Royal Fusiliers, themselves organised and led a counter-attack. They regained part of the line, but both were killed and their men driven back. At that hour further attempts were useless. The



⁴⁴ Br.-Gen. L. W. de V. Sadleir-Jackson, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., 9th Lancers. Commanded 10th Bn., London Regt., 1917; 54th Inf. Bde., 1917-19. Officer of British Regular Army; of Middleton, Co. Cork, Ireland; b. 31 Dec. 1876. Killed in motor accident, 21 May 1932.

⁴⁵ Wixcey had already led a counter-attack at 2 p.m. At that stage "D" Coy., 11th Royal Fusiliers, appears to have consisted of Capt. P. Baker, wounded, and three men.

36th Brigade of the 12th Division was ordered to assemble at the support line of the 18th Division to carry out the rôle previously allotted to the 54th Brigade, which would now merely cover its assembly. The barrage arrangements were altered so that the attack could start from the support position.

It was inevitable that the loss of this ground should be sharply felt by the Australian troops; ever since their arrival on the Somme-Ancre peninsula they had been steadily gaining ground, and they had never felt the slightest doubt of their ability to hold it. Yet here, as at Villers-Bretonneux, no sooner had the front line been handed over to British troops than the enemy seized it. Many Australians not unnaturally inferred that the German counter-attack was due to the discovery of the relief, but this was not the case.

German records show that the Second German Army was determined to recapture the ground seized by the 5th Aust. Divn., but had decided to postpone the attempt until the exhausted 107th Divn. was replaced by the 27th (of Bullecourt fame, perhaps the toughest enemy ever met by the Australians). It is true that during this delay, on Aug. 1, three Germans of the 43rd Res. Divn. earned a large monetary reward,⁴⁶ by at last capturing two prisoners, who said they belonged to the 18th Brit. Divn., and that the German staff thus discovered that the 5th Divn. had been relieved after its attack—a usual proceeding. The 54th German Corps estimated its new opponent as “a good average division.”⁴⁷

The attack by the 27th Divn. was launched after ten minutes' preliminary bombardment,⁴⁸ laid down by a very strong artillery—32 specially emplaced trench-mortars and 96 batteries, including many from the 107th, 108th, and 243rd Divns. The assault was made by four battalions. The British resistance was reported as weak, except on the flanks, but the Germans noted that there, and in subsequent counter-attacks, groups of British troops fought very stubbornly.

The 54th German Corps reported that it had captured 8 officers and 274 other ranks mainly of the 18th and 58th Divisions but including some “machine-gunners” of the 50th Division. The British troops had been warned against giving information, if captured,⁴⁹ or even talking among themselves, and had been told—what was true—that the enemy respected a prisoner who held his tongue; yet it was almost inconceivable

⁴⁶ 200 marks were distributed between three men of the 4/203rd R.I.R.

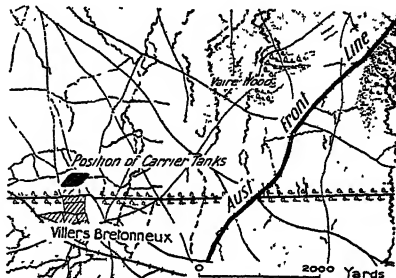
⁴⁷ In a captured map of this date the 2nd and 3rd Aust. and 37th French (Colonial) Divs. in the line are all marked as “attacking storm troops.”

⁴⁸ This was short for the Germans. On the other hand British attacks were now mostly made without preliminary bombardment.

⁴⁹ For example, a warning was ordered to be pasted in each man's paybook.

that no hint of the coming offensive would leak out. But night fell on August 7th without any sign of German awareness—very remarkable evidence of the staunchness of average Englishmen in such a predicament.

It is true that early on the morning of the 7th Germans unsuccessfully tried to raid the 3rd Division in the always difficult sector facing Accroche Wood; and an hour before sunset a shell set fire to one of sixteen supply tanks that had been crowded into an orchard on the northern edge of Villers-Bretonneux. Seeing the dense smoke, the German artillery observers then concentrated their guns on the wood and all but three of the tanks were quickly ablaze, and their combustible loads exploding. All the tanks were destroyed except three, which were saved by their crews and some Australian artillerymen working amid this inferno in which the tank company commander, Maj. Partington,⁵⁰ himself was wounded.



Onlookers said that the first shell was obviously a chance shot; and though the destruction of the carriers and their stores was a serious matter, the enemy still seemed to have no suspicion of what was impending when night fell and behind every part of the Fourth Army's front infantry, artillery, motor and horse transport, engineers, and pioneers started to pour along their various tracks towards the line, while unseen aeroplanes droned above. An Australian who motored through Amiens at dusk noted that on its western outskirts

we began to pass British cavalry—their horses lined at the right side of the road, heads towards us, evidently waiting to move off. As we got into Amiens itself (it now being practically dark) we found this cavalry moving quietly through the streets. It was wonderfully arranged. The paved streets were empty except for the cavalry

⁵⁰ Maj. W. Partington, M.C.; Tank Corps (formerly Cheshire Regt.). Commanded No. 1 Gun Carrier Coy., 5th Tank Bde., 1918. Paper mill manager; of London; b. Hull, Yorkshire, Eng., 1 Mar. 1894. Gnrs. W. L. Atkinson (Unley and Nantawarra, S.A.) and J. J. Leyden (Port Melbourne) helped him to save the three tanks and Gnr. J. S. Bannon (Sydney and Brisbane) was mortally wounded in attempting to put out a fire in a tank.

column, and so they were able to move two columns abreast, and we rushing past the side of them—making three streams of traffic all moving the same way. Behind us there had tacked itself on an ambulance car. The British cavalry columns were paired off exactly as in a review, always precisely abreast. If there was a cart beside us, then there was a cart beside it, paired off almost wheel for wheel—two carts, two waggon, twenty pairs of waggons, twenty pairs of guns, two streams of horsemen—all streaming the same way on the pale, clean cobblestones through the dark winding streets. Before we reached the centre of the city they moved off by some avoiding road round the boulevards to the south. . . .

Next came ten miles of ordinary traffic; but at Heilly, three miles behind the III Corps line, the same observer again

began to strike slow moving traffic. . . . We found ourselves feeling our way, the car crawling ahead in a line of infantry and transport. This sheered off to the left after Heilly station.

Walking southwards in the dark he recognised the Bray-Corbie road "by the jingle of traffic along it."

Never had a British attack been preceded by such a moving forward, not merely of the troops to launch it, but of the divisions that would carry the advance farther. To-morrow, when the first line attacked, these reserves would keep pace behind them.⁵¹ Ever since that night it has been debated, "Who was mainly responsible for the plan of this battle—Foch, Haig, Rawlinson, Monash?" As to the strategy—during the German March offensive Byng and Rawlinson had suggested a British attack on the Somme.⁵² Foch approved, incorporated the idea in his scheme for disengaging offensives, and in May asked Haig to proceed with the plans. Rawlinson, Montgomery, Birdwood and White drafted a scheme, but the Germans, striking on May 27th, put the project temporarily out of question. In July, when opportunity again opened, Foch suggested to Haig a stroke elsewhere, but Haig and Rawlinson were then convinced that the best chance offered at Amiens. How far Monash contributed to bring about that realisation

⁵¹ The vast work of transportation along the railways belongs to British history, although Australian railway operating companies took part in it. In the British zone since the German offensive in March 445 miles of broad-gauge railway, and 301 of light railway, had been laid, the new broad-gauge lines including one connecting the British and French zones but avoiding Amiens and Abbeville. Many single lines had been doubled. On the British-controlled railways more than 900 main-line locomotives were in traffic, running over 571 kilometres of line. In the first week of August these lines worked at greater capacity than ever before. No less than 158 trains were run daily to the railhead (compared with 130 in July). The locomotives under steam averaged over 91 kilometres daily (against 74½ in June). That week 302,785 troops moved by rail.

⁵² See Vol. V, p. 213n.

can probably never be assessed—the "Digger" and his leaders undoubtedly played in it the vital part.⁵³ The tactical plan was Rawlinson's and Montgomery's—in particular they had to solve the problems of the right flank, where Currie, with his corps arriving at the last moment in country unknown to it, had the most difficult task, especially for artillery. It was Haig and Foch who insisted on secrecy. The methods of co-operation between tanks, infantry, and artillery were those devised by Monash and his staff for Hamel, which were based on—and improved—those of the Tank Corps at Cambrai. For the rest the several corps mainly elaborated the arrangements made at Rawlinson's conferences, but the elaboration was immensely important. Monash applied to it his full power of minute forethought, immense care, and pellucid exposition, and even in this night march the men felt that, whatever might lie in front, all was right behind them. Late that afternoon this message had been read to them:

For the first time in the history of this Corps all five Australian Divisions will to-morrow engage in the largest and most important battle operation ever undertaken by the Corps. They will be supported by an exceptionally powerful artillery, and by tanks and aeroplanes on a scale never previously attempted. The full resources of our sister Dominion, the Canadian Corps, will also operate on our right, while two British Divisions will guard our left flank. . . .

Because of the completeness of our plans and dispositions, of the magnitude of the operations, of the number of troops employed, and of the depth to which we intend to overrun the enemy's positions, this battle will be one of the most memorable of the whole war; and there can be no doubt that, by capturing our objectives, we shall inflict blows upon the enemy which will make him stagger, and will bring the end appreciably nearer. I entertain no sort of doubt that every Australian soldier will worthily rise to so great an occasion . . . and be animated by no other resolve than a grim determination to see through, to a clean finish, whatever his task may be . . . for the sake of AUSTRALIA, the Empire, and our cause.

I earnestly wish every soldier of the Corps the best of good fortune and a glorious and decisive victory, the story of which will re-echo throughout the world, and will live forever in the history of our home land.

John Monash.

⁵³ Monash for many years afterwards was inclined to believe that the project was originally suggested by him. As has been seen, this was not so, but it is known that Rawlinson and his chief-of-staff, fearing that the Australian Prime Minister might not welcome the undertaking, encouraged Monash to make the suggestions, hoping that Mr. Hughes would accept them more readily from that source.

CHAPTER XIV

"DER SCHWARZE TAG"

THE Australian infantry winding along their numerous approach tracks, constantly passing black silent masses of waiting tanks and crowded guns, were excited with their own realisation of the facts to which Monash's message referred—that at last all five divisions of their national army were attacking together, that the Canadian force was attacking beside them, and that this time they were not to be stopped short of the opposing guns—and also of the elating circumstance that, so far, the enemy showed no awareness of the blow about to fall. The infantry brigades started their approach at different hours, mostly between midnight and 1.30 a.m.; the troops of the two divisions that were to launch the first stages of attack (at 4.20) mostly passed through—and reached their jumping-off tapes before—those of the two divisions for the second objective. These then followed and assembled behind them.¹ At 3 a.m. when most units of the leading divisions had thus assembled and lain down, but about half of the two rearward ones were still moving up the tracks close behind them,² the air became dimmed by a morning mist which quickly thickened until at 3.30 it was difficult to see more than twenty yards on either side.

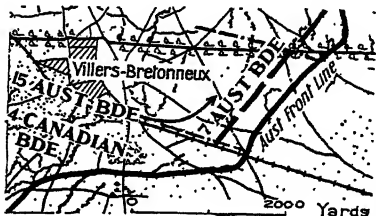
"It was getting too foggy to be pleasant," said Col. Sadler of the 17th Battalion afterwards describing the assembly. Men of Elliott's 15th Brigade, then toiling up from Bois l'Abbé to their starting lines by the brickfield in rear of the Australian right, have told how they were becoming anxious as to their direction when lights were suddenly seen in the mist ahead and there was the number of their battalion, 57, glowing above

¹ In some places, however, both forces were on the march at once.

² The right brigade (15th of 5th Div.) was then passing north and south of Villers-Bretonneux; the next (8th) was already in position between that town and Vaire Wood. The right brigade of the 4th Div., the 12th, was arriving at the assembly position; of the left brigade (4th) the 16th Bn. had marched up early in the night; the other battalions had just arrived.

them—candles in petrol tins with punctured numbers having been set on poles to mark the assembly points.³

Just then and in that area, near the Villers-Bretonneux-Marcelcave railway, there broke out a German bombardment. Shouting had been heard in rear, apparently associated with the assembly of the tanks, and the troops concluded that the Germans had overheard this and had called for artillery protection. The shelling fell on the right half of the two Australian brigades (7th and 15th) north of the railway and the left battalion (19th) of the 4th Canadian Brigade south of it. The officers quickly pushed their gathering men into trenches or shell-holes. It was often assumed that, by catching the assembly with his barrage, the enemy could shatter a preparing attack; but, as at Broodseinde and Bullecourt, the men lay quietly suffering the casualties where a shell chanced to catch some waiting group.⁴ "They're having their fun now," said men of the flank guard,⁵ "but wait till our barrage starts." The records of the Canadians make it evident that their reaction was the same.



German histories show that this bombardment was really part of the programme of a raid (code name "Ernte"—"Harvest") by the 148th I.R. (41st Divn.). Like several other attempts, all unsuccessful, after that of Aug. 3-4, this raid was due to reports of engine-noise and movements about Villers-Bretonneux. "Immediately after (the laying down of the bombardment)," says General Kabisch, "the raiders make their rush, and find—nothing. Not once does the enemy artillery answer. . . . The 148th could only report that they had found the foremost trenches of the enemy empty."⁶ The point raided was immediately south of the railway where the last of the 50th Aust. Bn., covering the 2nd Cdn. Divn., was just withdrawing when the shelling began.

³ The broad tapes for guiding up tanks were of considerable advantage to some of the infantry caught in this mist.

⁴ The barrage caused only some 20-30 casualties among the Australians. In mending telephone lines broken by it Lt. B. T. Kell (North Fremantle, W.A.) signalling officer of the 28th Bn. was mortally wounded.

⁵ This guard (formed, as it happened, by what we have nicknamed the "Brewery" company and another company of the 21st Bn.) was attached to the right (26th) battalion of the 2nd Div. to make sure of the railway cutting and embankment, and of close contact with the 2nd Cdn. Div.

⁶ *Der Schwarze Tag* pp. 120-1.

Though severe and maintained, with some diminution, for three-quarters of an hour, the bombardment was unnoticed by the Canadians and French farther south and by the British assembling on the heights north of the Somme. On this last sector, at 3.40 there broke out another bombardment.

A number of very distant batteries (noted an observer at Sailly-le-Sec) began to rain small shell on to the British front or support positions ahead of us. From ever so high up these little shells came whining down and then burst with a swish, as if they were shrapnel, or a pat, as if they were gas. This lasted about five minutes and seemed to be certainly a counter-preparation by the Germans against a suspected attack from the British front north of the Somme.

German histories state that this bombardment was called down by the commander of the II/265th R.I.R., Capt. Rechtern, on the slope north of the Somme.

About 3 a.m. Rechtern passed on a report that "Tommy" in fighting kit was lying out before his battalion's front. The III/265th on his right also heard troops ahead, and the noise of motor engines. German trench-mortars and heavy machine-guns opened, but the German artillery there, though strong on account of the recent operations, was for the same reason somewhat sparing of ammunition and had orders to cease fire after a short time unless the infantry's demand was repeated.⁷

About this time the last covering parties left by the right line-brigade, where the line of assembly lay far behind the front line, withdrew through the force in rear—the main part of the line companies having withdrawn some time before.⁸ From 3.50 a.m. the old front here for 400-700 yards ahead of the assembled troops lay empty except for the headquarters and medical detachments of two attacking battalions (19th and 20th) of the 5th Brigade which had established themselves there, north of the Roman road in anticipation of the start.⁹

By 3.40 the mist was so thick that some observers north of

⁷ The history of the 203rd F.A.R. says it fired from 4.10 to 4.20, but the German records for this battle were largely lost and the time here given, 3.40, is certain.

⁸ The 6th Bde. had held the 2nd Div.'s front, the 10th the 3rd Div.'s. In most of the latter the attacking troops assembled in the front line, and the garrison had been relieved by them between 1 and 3 a.m. There the attacking brigade had taken over the patrolling after nightfall, and at 10.30 p.m. a patrol of the 33rd Bn. had met a German patrol in the always difficult sector looking down on Accroche Wood. A bomb fight followed in which five of the 33rd were wounded. A patrol of the line battalion (38th) went out at once to search the ground but could find no German casualties.

⁹ As a precaution in case of some German raid, the headquarters runners and observers of the 20th Bn. guarded the empty trenches until five minutes before the fall of the barrage, when they withdrew to shelter. The attack orders were buried till zero hour beneath the dugout floor.

the Somme feared it might have prevented the "taking off" of the British aeroplanes that should then be patrolling overhead so that their engines might drown the noise of the droves of tanks then beginning their final move to the front. At 3.50 the same observers detected the distant sound of an engine—either tank or aeroplane; a minute later they recognised it as that of a cruising aeroplane. Other machines maintained their drone over all sectors of the German front to be attacked. Through this buzz the purr of the tank engines, throttled down, was inaudible even to the waiting Australians except a few who were very close.

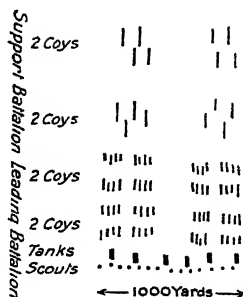
The German bombardment in the railway area had almost died away when at 4.20, slightly preceded by some batteries of the III Corps north of the Somme,¹⁰ the main 2,000 guns of the Fourth Army, as well as those of Debeney's First French Army farther south, started almost with a single crash. Nearly every account of the fight, Allied and German, speaks of that astonishing outburst. As at Broodseinde, for the troops who had been waiting under the galling shell-fire near the railway that tremendous orchestra was elating music. In some places the excited troops cheered the sound. Nearly every man lit a cigarette as all along the line the companies of the attacking brigades rose and moved forward.

Practically all infantry in the Fourth Army's offensive appears to have attacked in the same formation. Ahead, near the tanks, were to go the scouts of the leading battalions, forming a thin line intended to work as "beaters," pointing out hostile posts to the tank crews one of whose difficulties was their limited vision. Some 150 yards behind the screen were to come the main bodies of the leading battalions each on a two-company front,¹¹ the companies

¹⁰ By some mistake in the timing the guns north of the river opened at 4.19 a.m.

¹¹ The average front of an Australian battalion attacking the first or second objectives this day was about 1,000 yards, but owing to the latitude wisely left by divisional commanders to their brigadiers, the dispositions differed. Thus the right brigade (7th) attacked the first objective with three battalions (26th, 28th, 27th) in line and the 25th carrying. The next brigade (5th) attacked with two battalions (17th and 19th) an intermediate first objective of its own, the 18th and 20th Bns. leap-frogging there and going on to the main first objective. The next brigade (9th, of three battalions) attacked with two battalions, the third mopping up Accroche Wood behind them. The left flank brigade (11th) attacked with two battalions, a third passing through one of them on Gailly Ridge and a fourth following in reserve. The dispositions for the attack on the second and third objectives varied similarly.

being strung out in successive lines of tiny columns, each a section of from six to eight men in single file with from 30 to 60 yards between sections. Behind these came the supporting battalion or battalions in artillery formation of platoons in file.¹² The infantry for the second phase was to follow at varying time and distance according to the wishes of their brigadiers but in much the same formation as these supports.



But in the mist, which now was suddenly thickened by the dust of the barrage and the artificial fog of the smoke shells,¹³ all such formation was lost from the first. Sections in each line could not see the sections next them.¹⁴ On many sectors of the Australian front on the night of the 7th intelligence officers and scouts, helped sometimes by the engineers, had laid additional white tapes for some distance forward to guide the flanks of companies towards the objective. These greatly helped in giving a straight start. Officers with prismatic compasses guided those troops who could see them.¹⁵ Here and there, where the first line of tanks came up and, as planned, passed through just as the infantry started, they gave groups of infantry a straight lead though parties were also led astray by them. In this fog, however, many tanks did not reach the foremost infantry until the German main line of resistance had been passed. The sound of the barrage was an important guide, for the troops could not see the shell bursts except where parties stumbled dangerously close upon them—indeed many of the 7th Brigade found themselves in their own barrage and a number were hit by it. "I had a feeling," wrote Lieut. Binder¹⁶ of

¹² As a rule each company moved with its four platoons (each 25-30 men) disposed diamond-wise. In some cases the four companies of the battalion also were disposed diamond-wise. It was this formation of groups in single file that caused German reports constantly to refer to advancing "columns."

¹³ The density varied. Sometimes a man could not be seen ten yards away; at other moments he might become visible at forty or fifty.

¹⁴ Some company commanders extended their men into line so that the sections might keep touch. In at least one platoon the men closed up and for a time held hands.

¹⁵ Some battalion intelligence officers—for example Lt. E. M. Burns (Shepparton Vic.) of the 60th—had given a compass bearing to all their companies.

¹⁶ Lt. H. A. L. Binder, M.C.; 59th Bn. Farmer; of Koo-wee-rup, Vic.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 5 Apr. 1894.

the 59th afterwards, "of being behind a curtain of rushing noise."

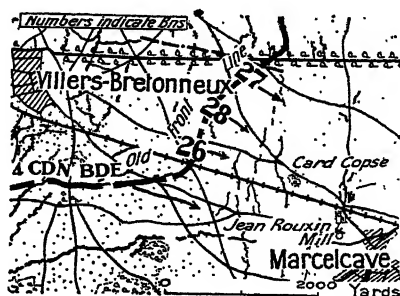
In these conditions the attacking brigades, and most of the following ones, became split from the start into small groups led by any officer, N.C.O., or natural leader who took the responsibility of guiding them. Many followed any forward leading track or the Marcelcave railway. Many just pressed on blindly except for the occasional sight of a shadowy figure ahead or beside them. German machine-guns rattled out, heavily in places, mostly in the blank fog ahead, but sometimes on the flanks and occasionally in rear. Now and again an advancing party blundered straight upon a group of German machine-gunners squatting, with scared faces, in a shell-hole or small trench. Generally the crew would throw up its hands, sometimes after a few shots. Here and there a brave man kept his gun firing until rushed by someone from flank or rear and shot.

It had been suspected that the Germans were reorganising their line; that very night sentries had reported that most of the German flares were rising from farther

7th Brigade

back than hitherto. On the southern sector the 2nd Division ran through what seemed to be two lines of very scattered small posts before coming to strong resistance. When nearing Card Copse, however, slightly north of the railway, a belt of effective wire-entanglement was met—an uncommon experience that day. Troops making for a gap in it were sharply fired on from some strong-point forty yards beyond. The attack was forced to ground. In that part no tanks had yet arrived, but a minute or so later a

figure was seen walking along the German parapet firing a revolver. It was a Tasmanian, Lieut. Gaby, a company commander of the 28th Battalion, who had found another gap in the wire. A company of Germans, fifty men and four machine-



guns, surrendered to him.¹⁷ Not far away Lieut. Shorroch¹⁸ of the same battalion performed a very similar feat, capturing twenty Germans and two machine-guns. The arrival of the tanks ended all resistance at that line. On the extreme right also groups of the 26th Battalion were involved in a tussle with machine-guns before Card Copse.¹⁹

The position here attacked was the main line of resistance of the centre regiment (18th) of the 41st Divn., which had been in the line for a month, following a month's rest. The 18th I.R. held almost exactly the one-mile front attacked by the 7th Bde. It had six companies (about 400 men, including the heavy machine-gunners) distributed along the main line of resistance 300 yards west of Card Copse or in the small outposts of the forward zone ahead, and two more companies in or level with the Copse.

In this sector many of the forward German troops believed an attack to be impending, having heard and reported the noise of motor engines (thought to be tanks) almost nightly for the past week. But the British bombardment was at first assumed to be retaliation for the shelling that accompanied the German raid. Its continuance soon brought home the truth except to those in deep dugouts in rear. One of the machine-gun officers at the main line of resistance tells how, after a weak splutter of fire from the German outposts, he heard the sound of engines. In the mist the shape of a tank passed by on his flank. Figures with English helmets occasionally appeared in front and were fired at. Then suddenly he and his men were attacked from the left rear, and from the front. A bomb fight followed and his post was captured. Of the two forward battalions and two companies of the resting battalion, which, owing to the regiment's weakness, were kept in close support—totalling 715 men not including heavy machine-gunners—only 8 officers and 50 others escaped.²⁰

Meanwhile the two companies of the 21st, following as guard behind the southern flank of the brigade, had kept beside the railway,²¹ meeting there the liaison platoon of the 19th Canadian Battalion. A quarter of an hour after the start they met increasing machine-gun fire from some point on the Canadian side by which the Canadians were held up also.²² The Victorian Lewis gunners fought a duel with the German guns

¹⁷ For this action Gaby was awarded the Victoria Cross. Three days later, before he heard of the award, he was killed.

¹⁸ Lt. J. Shorroch, D.S.O.; 28th Bn. Policeman; of Perth, W.A.; b. Hellifield, Yorks, Eng. 1891. Died 26 Nov. 1919.

¹⁹ Capt. W. McL. Cameron (Rockhampton, Q'land) was killed here. Lt. C. H. Cockrill (Millaa Millaa, Q'land) making straight for a German machine-gun was killed just as he reached it. (Lt. F. O. Griffiths, 19th Bn., of Mosman, N.S.W., was killed in the same way farther north). Lt. H. H. P. Hamilton (26th, of Morning-side, Q'land) was mortally wounded in the Australian barrage.

²⁰ *Schlachten des Weltkrieges*, Vol. 36, p. 115. The strengths here given are based on captured returns also quoted by the German historian (p. 28).

²¹ They closed to the right to keep touch. The acting commander of the 21st Bn., Maj. A. E. Reed went with them.

²² It was found to come from an eastern branch of Jaffa Trench.

which presently were silenced. The post was then taken and ten prisoners handed over to the Canadians. The Canadian flank, however, continued to be stubbornly opposed and the two companies moved ahead slowly, constantly helping with their Lewis guns. When getting near Marcelcave Lieut. Mason²³ of the leading company crossed the railway to reconnoitre another strongly resisting post, in an orchard near Jean Rouxin Mill. Just then there arrived a messenger from the commander of the Canadian left²⁴ asking for help in attacking it. Assisted by some of the 7th Brigade who were lost in the fog Mason's party in a vigorous bomb fight drove the Germans out.²⁵ The Australians then hurried on and lined the railway ahead to protect the flank of the 26th which had advanced north of Marcelcave.

Meanwhile the "Brewery" company, mopping up, found the captured post to be a headquarters. German records make clear that it was the headquarters of the southern battalion of the 18th I.R. whose left just overlapped the railway line. The headquarters guard was fifteen men. The battalion commander, Rittmeister von Kries, and a few of the men escaped at the last moment but left several piles of interesting documents. An Australian mounted orderly, who came up with a reconnoitring staff officer, was sent racing with these to 7th Bde. headquarters.²⁶

At this stage, shortly after 6 a.m., when the northern outskirts of Marcelcave and the old inner line of Amiens defences were being reached on this flank of the corps, the mist had begun to thin. It was possible to see, perhaps, 100 yards, and half an hour later 200. Officers and N.C.O's could push the groups nearest them into some semblance of formation. The foremost tanks, which hitherto had merely made for the sound of the nearest machine-guns, now steered by sight. Several of them helped the 26th past the north of Marcelcave which the Canadians had not yet taken.²⁷

²³ Lt. E. B. Mason, M.C.; 21st Bn. Tram conductor; of Prahran, Vic. b. Fitzroy, Vic., 7 Jan. 1890.

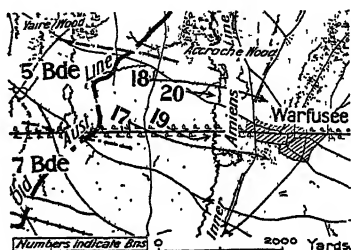
²⁴ Canadian records give his name, Capt. R. H. Bliss.

²⁵ Of the seven prisoners taken five were wounded.

²⁶ Of the help given during this phase the diary of the 2nd Cdn. Div. says: "The co-operation of the 7th A.I. Bde. . . . on our left was almost better than could be hoped for. Many instances occurred where our troops were held up along the line of the railway, where there was a series of strong machine-gun nests, and in some instances the Australians assisted our advance materially by their Lewis-gun fire as well as by sending small parties of infantry to take part in the assault."

²⁷ Tanks assisted the 26th Bn. to rush the old inner defences at Labastille Mill and the Factory, at each of which many prisoners were captured.

Farther north, where the distance to the old defence line was shorter, the fog still lay thick when the 5th Brigade approached it. This Brigade's course led it gradually across the Roman road—it was to start with the road on its left and finish with it on its right. The road was the one sure guide to the objective and here the jumble of units was bewildering. The two leading battalions, 19th and 20th, were to take the old Amiens line and stay there,²⁸ the 17th and 18th passing through to reach the first objective, beyond Warfusée and the valley with the guns. Tanks had been carefully allotted for tackling each sector of the old trench-line, but the force now consisted of intermingled groups of several brigades with a sprinkling of tanks wandering forward through fog and the old inner Amiens line was taken by those who stumbled upon it. The Germans fought in places. Capt. J. B. Lane of the 18th afterwards described the process as



someone telling any one he met that there were some Germans down in some corner he had passed or where he had seen them; collecting a few men and going round and grabbing the Germans, generally from the rear.²⁹

At least one considerable body of Germans here was completely missed by the 2nd Division a little south of the Roman road; the attacking troops passed it unseeing and unseen, and it surrendered to the 5th Division advancing later. Similar incidents happened elsewhere.³⁰ Near the Roman road Lieuts.

²⁸ This objective was known within the brigade as the "Black Line."

²⁹ The same account says: "Lane poked his rifle into one dug-out and a man poked his rifle up and fired aimlessly at him. . . . It took a little while to get these trenches cleared—there were a good many bits of communication trench and so on in which there were Germans. Occasionally bombs had to be used."

³⁰ In the Amiens line such bodies remained in the eastern elements of the large redoubts. A strong party was found ahead of Capt. Portman's company of the 20th. Sgt. S. H. Sparks (Sydney) located it. No tanks had yet appeared in this neighbourhood. Accordingly, while he and Lt. J. P. Thomas (Forbes, N.S.W.) took a party around the strong-point on the south, Capt. Portman led another around the north. When the Australians were within twenty yards a company of Germans—65 strong with 6 machine-guns—put up their hands. Another 90 were found in parts of the same line near by.

Harries³¹ and Sullivan³² with ten of the 17th Battalion working up the old trenches captured 100 prisoners and many machine-guns. They were forthwith attacked by German bombers from farther up the trench but tanks with a large party of infantry then appearing out of the mist enabled them to hand over their prisoners and press on.

The sector facing the 5th Bde. was held mainly by the 152nd I.R. (northern regiment of the 41st Divn.), although the left of the 15th I.R. (13th Divn.) also came into it. The 152nd was much the strongest regiment of the 41st Divn. the average "fighting strength" of its battalions, including heavy machine-gun companies, being 482. The commander of one of its support companies south of Warfusée tells how he ordered his men to shoot into the mist till only ten rounds per man remained. After half an hour they heard tanks approaching from their rear. These enfiladed the position, and hard after them, at the double, came cheering Australians who pulled the garrison out of the trench. Of the two forward battalions only fragments came back.

Leaving the old trenches behind them, the 17th and 18th Battalions passed on either side of Warfusée. Groups of each carried out the work set down in orders for the inner companies, entering the north and south of the village,³³ bombing cellars and routing German headquarters out of dugouts. In rear, the Roman road was still thronged by parties from all four divisions. Capt. Dunkley³⁴ of the 59th Battalion (5th Division) afterwards told how as he plunged along it through the fog, compass in hand, he called out. His shout was answered in German—by prisoners going back—so he knew the 2nd Division was doing its part ahead of him. On the road itself was part of the 34th Battalion whose proper sector was nearly a mile to the north, and also the 46th Battalion which was to leap-frog it. The leader of the 46th and several other stray officers were standing with their compasses placed on the cobblestones and their steel helmets carefully laid aside, arguing out their position. At that moment there loomed from the mist ahead an

³¹ Lt. F. H. E. Harries, 17th Bn. Business secretary; of Manly, N.S.W.; b. Leichhardt, N.S.W., 22 Nov. 1887.

³² Maj. V. J. Sullivan, M.C.; 17th Bn. Clerk; of Marrickville, N.S.W.; b. Paddington, N.S.W., 19 June 1892.

³³ Thus Capt. E. T. Harnett (Newcastle, N.S.W.) of the 17th, who, with a few men of several battalions, had met groups under Lts. R. W. Pettit (Marrickville, N.S.W.) and R. R. F. Willard (Gordon, N.S.W.), himself pushed on round the south of the village as no other troops could be seen there, while sending the two juniors into the village.

³⁴ Lt. (T/Capt.) R. Dunkley, 59th Bn. Bank accountant; of Wangaratta, Vic., b. Wangaratta. 6 Sep. 1887.

Australian escorting back a dozen Germans. "Where did you get them?" they asked. "In Warfusée." "Where's that?" "About a kilometre and a half up the road." This settled the location—the leader of the 46th took his unit in single file northwards along the old trench-line. At one of the redoubts it ran into a force of Germans facing a broken down tank but missed by the attacking divisions. Men of the rear divisions—46th and 32nd Battalions—easily captured the trench. About the same time some of the 31st Battalion³⁵ was fired on from a house on the western outskirts of Warfusée, and took 50 prisoners there.

Apparently this was headquarters of the two forward battalions of the 152nd I.R. whose senior commander, Res. Capt. Hatzfeld, organised a defence of the entrance to the village. A nest of three heavy machine-guns south of the road was first suppressed by a passing tank and infantry (evidently of the 17th Bn.). Some refugees posted north of the road were next subdued. Finally after a fight in the farm the two battalion commanders and their staffs were driven by a tank to their dugout, where they were captured about 7 a.m.

Of the 3rd Division the right brigade (9th) was responsible for taking Accroche Wood and the advance beyond it, and the left brigade (11th) for the southern side of the Somme. Stiff fighting was expected in the wood, round the rear and northern end of which part of the old French defence line ran. As anticipated, many Germans were there but mostly in dugouts and shelters, and the fog helped even more than elsewhere. Parties were on them before they attempted resistance, and most of them surrendered without a shot.³⁶

These Germans belonged to the three regiments of the 13th Divn. (15th, 13th, and 55th I.R.), which had been in the line for over five weeks, and had already suffered the attack upon Hamel. The average trench strength of the battalions (without their machine-gun companies) was 284 rifles, but the division's sector was narrow, about 2,600 yards. Its forward zone was, at the wood, nearly a mile deep, and the German official monograph states that on the map its defences looked gratifying, with numerous successive positions³⁷ all wired; "but what showed on

³⁵ Part of Capt. G. H. Wilson's company.

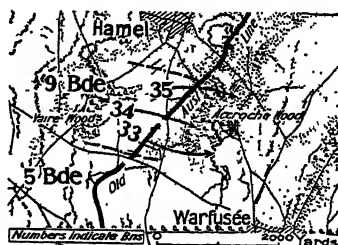
³⁶ Of the 2nd Pioneers responsible for clearing the roads in this area, a platoon under Lt. R. W. Edwards (Claremont, W.A.) took several prisoners, and one under Lt. H. E. Rich (East Brunswick, Vic.), getting ahead of the moppers-up, captured 40 and 3 machine-guns.

³⁷ Outpost-line. line of strong-points, line of resistance of the forward zone, main line of resistance, another set of strong-points, and artillery protection line, with machine-gun posts distributed along the whole depth.

the paper was to a great extent not there." Moreover, of its 9 battalions 13 companies had been kept in the forward zone, which should have been lightly held, and only 11 in or behind the main line of resistance. The German historian says that the reason "is easy to find." In the "Australasian raiding activity," if posts were too far apart or supports too distant the posts were surrounded and captured.

The 9th Australian Infantry Brigade—as also the 12th, which was later to leap-frog it—contained only three battalions; and, owing to the passage through and around the wood, the 33rd and 35th Battalions, which were to seize the wood and pass on, and the 34th, which was to mop it up,³⁸ became even more scattered than their neighbours. The confusion was increased

by heavy losses among the officers: of the 35th Battalion within two minutes of the start the staff of one company³⁹ were put out of action by a chance German shell. At the same stage Maj. Carr was dangerously wounded; Capt. Yates,⁴⁰ who led the fighting at the only point of serious resistance—the tangle



of trenches north of the wood—was mortally hit. Most of the groups on passing the wood lost the barrage, although the commander of one support company, Capt. Coghill, finding no troops in front of him, pressed on with the men near by to catch it up on Gailly Ridge, the long, wheat-covered spur east of the wood. Here lay the main German line, with machine-gun posts scattered, as if from a pepper-pot, across the spur—seven in a single wheatfield. But here the tanks were up with the infantry; and, though several machine-gunners fought to the last, the only real difficulty for the Australians was that of keeping touch and direction in the fog. Officers of the supporting battalion (34th), which had cleared the wood by 5 o'clock, gathered stray groups of all three units, 150 men in all, into a

³⁸ Under the plans of Lt.-Col. J. E. C. Lord, commanding temporarily in place of Br.-Gen. H. A. Goddard, the 34th was to move into the wood from either flank; in the fog, however, precision was impossible.

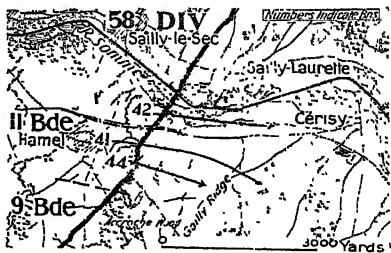
³⁹ Under Lt. M. E. Lyne, (Goulburn, N.S.W.).

⁴⁰ Capt. A. E. Yates, 35th Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Duntroon, A.C.T.; b. Widnes, Lancs., Eng., 20 May 1886. This outstanding officer, after being shot in the leg and gassed, was missed. When found next day he was dead.

company, and then advanced with them up Gailly Ridge.⁴¹ There they were temporarily held by Maj. Grant.⁴² But, hidden by the mist ahead, other parties had cleared the ground, and at 5.45, just as the fog showed signs of thinning, were working down into the long valley where it was hoped to find the German guns.

From the six forward battalions of the 13th Division only a much reduced reserve company of the 55th I.R., a handful of both battalions of the 13th, and possibly a slightly larger number of the 15th got away. The regimental commander of the 15th, Maj. von Bila, was mortally wounded by a shell bursting at the entrance of the headquarters dugout, at the east end of Lamotte. The commander of the 13th was wounded and captured.

The left brigade of the 3rd Division, the 11th, while lying ready in the Somme flats and the trenches east of Hamel, had caught the fringe of the precautionary barrage called down by the Germans north of the Somme. Just before the start a false rumour went round that the British there had been driven back, and when the brigade advanced it expected to have to fling back its left flank. Its left battalion, the 42nd, attacked on a single-company front, having to pass the narrow space between the hills and the southern bend of the river. On the other hand the right battalion, the 44th, attacked on a very wide front but would be leap-frogged on Gailly Ridge by the 41st and a company of the reserve battalion (43rd).



Here the mist was probably thicker than elsewhere—Capt. Longmore of the 44th states that after the barrage came down it was impossible to see one's own outstretched hand and any form of control except self-control was out of the question. But the troops knew well what was to be done and each man pressed on in the direction of the barrage. The Germans had no opportunity of defending themselves except blindly. After

⁴¹ Half a mile east of Accroche Wood the 34th found the bodies of three Americans (Sgt. Williams and two privates) killed in the Hamel fighting.

⁴² Maj. F. G. Grant, D.S.O.; 34th and 36th Bns. Engineer; of Cremorne, N.S.W.; b. Bombay, India, 29 Sep. 1881.

climbing Gailly Ridge the 44th crossed the wide, wheat-covered top, and, as the mist lightened, the tanks, till then more heard than seen, became visible to men near them. Yet the mist was still thick when the 44th reached its intermediate objective, the Warfusée-Gailly road, and the 41st moved through. The 44th was naturally scattered—its full attacking strength gave only one man to every $2\frac{1}{2}$ yards of front⁴³—and when passing through its line on Gailly Ridge the 41st found a strong party of Germans there in the sunken roads known as "Spur Fork." The 42nd on the flats had the Cérissy road and the river for a guide. Some platoons had to struggle through mud, weed, and undergrowth, but the scattered German posts on the flats could only fire blindly, and were easily captured. The southern edge of the river was cleared by a platoon of the 42nd, while two attached platoons of the 39th (10th Brigade) advanced along the north of the canal and, without losing a man, captured 40 Germans and 5 machine-guns.

Most of the prisoners taken by the 11th Bde. were found to belong to a fresh division, the 108th; here its 97th I.R. had relieved the 202nd R.I.R. two nights earlier. The 108th was the division that had been relieved by the 41st on July 10 in front of Villers-Bretonneux after suffering the first strain of peaceful penetration there. After a month's rest it had been brought back to relieve the tired 43rd Res. Divn., which had been astride of the Somme since the week before the Battle of Hamel and had now a lower "trench-strength" than any division in the Second German Army—167 rifles per battalion. The front and support battalions of the incoming 97th I.R. had settled into their positions, but the staffs of the outgoing division and of the 202nd R.I.R. were still in charge when the blow fell.⁴⁴

The line battalion, with a front of 1,200 yards, had only one company (64 men) in the forward zone, and three in the main line; two companies of the support battalion and its headquarters were near the first Australian objective on the slope leading down to Cérissy. The resistance met by the 41st at Spur Fork came from the headquarters of the line battalion, the III/97th, whose commander, Capt. Schöning, sustained a brave fight against figures dimly seen in front, until he was mortally wounded by a shot from the rear. The leading Australians left the position to be mopped up by their supports.⁴⁵ The commander of the

⁴³ The extension of men in each line would, of course, be very much greater.

⁴⁴ These divisions had two regiments north of the river: the incoming 265th R.I.R. had taken over on Aug. 6; but the II/137th was just marching through Chipilly to relieve the 201st R.I.R. when the bombardment began.

⁴⁵ The commander of the 9th Coy., who was captured in this sunken road, states that, having escaped from his escort, he was recaptured and "gone through" by a "horde of drunken Australians." Hearing a call in German, he now saw a German post forty yards away, with a machine-gun. With a wounded companion he made for it, when another group of Australians sprang on him and "went through" him a third time for souvenirs. The German machine-gun opened but, being now in the midst of the Australian reserves, was immediately suppressed. The statement that they were "gone through" for souvenirs is made by

support battalion and part of one of his companies alone managed to withdraw.

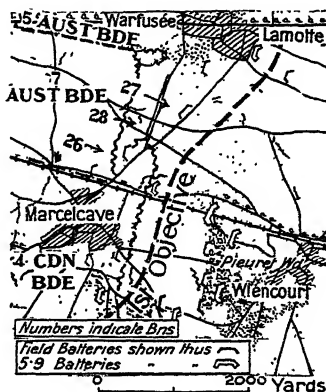
Thus, when the fog began rapidly to clear, the 2nd and 3rd Australian Divisions were approaching their objective—the first or “Green” line on the plan. The conditions of the fighting now changed with equal suddenness. Numerous accounts from the Australian infantry record how, when the mist thinned, the tanks went straight for resistance wherever they saw it. A few had been disabled—slightly north of the Roman road an explosion occurred beneath one, causing one of its two caterpillar tracks to strip off. It had struck one of a nest of contact mines.⁴⁶ Three more struck nests elsewhere, and several others, unable to see obstacles in the fog, were ditched. But about forty of the first wave of tanks⁴⁷ were with or near the foremost parties of the two divisions as, with the mist lightening, these headed into the long, deep valley on either side of Warfusée and farther north, eager to seize the enemy’s guns. Farther south by the railway, on the extreme right, two company commanders of the 26th Battalion, whose parties were

German officers captured by British and Canadian troops as well as by Australians, and is, of course, true; the practice was also common among German troops, though to a less degree. But the allegation of drunkenness made in several German regimental histories—and made equally against British, Australian, and Canadian soldiers—is hard to understand. Rum was not issued to the Australians before the attack. It is fairly probable that, here or there in the large forces engaged, individuals managed to carry some liquor in their waterbottles, and in the later stages of the fight wines and beer were found in the German headquarters and canteens. But there is no recorded instance of drunkenness (though single cases may have occurred), and the writer, who walked all over the battlefield on the heels of the attacking infantry, saw no sign of it in this or any other engagement of Australian troops. One German account says that “*judging by their manner*” some of the men were drunk. And the fact that nearly all these allegations are made by officers “plundered” for souvenirs suggests that, to some of them, this effrontery was only explicable as due to drink. Some, however, speak most kindly of their captors.

⁴⁶ The nest had been fenced off with a few strands of barbed-wire. An engineer was at once posted to warn traffic away. Two such nests were near the Roman road, a mine in the second being struck an hour later by one of the few supply tanks that had survived the previous day’s fire—it was now returning after carrying its load to the 19th Bn. The loading party of “Diggers” was on board but no one was hurt though the caterpillar was broken. Two tanks of the 2nd Tank Bn. with the 2nd Div. were thus disabled and one was ditched in a wide trench, but, says one account, “the first batch of German prisoners gave it a push and it caught up.” Farther north one of the 3rd Div.’s tanks ran on a mine at Accroche Wood, and one of “C” Coy., 8th Tank Bn. (whose twelve machines were to operate later at the junction of the 4th and 5th Divs.) also ran on a mine in the old No-Man’s Land on the Fouilloy-Warfusée road. Fourteen mines were early removed by the 5th Fld. Coy. from the Roman road. Forty yards west of the Amiens line in the 7th Bde.’s sector a field kitchen of the 28th Bn. ran over one of a small nest of mines without exploding it. The 28th collected the mines into a dugout. They were in containers like kerosene tins, and were buried in groups of half a dozen, with the tops a few inches above the ground.

⁴⁷ That is to say, on an average one tank to 200 yards of front.

stopped by fire from Marcelcave on the Canadian front, asked a tank officer, Lieut. Percy-Eade,⁴⁸ to attack the village. He drove along the outskirts, firing his 6-pounder, and then dived into the north of the village followed by the Australians. Working through the northern outskirts the Queenslanders looked into the southward-running valley beyond, along the bottom of which Pieuret Wood led down across the Canadian front towards the Luce. From the edge of the wood a battery of German field-guns opened on them as they settled down. Nearer, the crew of a battery of 5.9-inch howitzers tried to bolt from a neighbouring quarry—the 26th shot them as they ran. In Marcelcave, behind the right rear, an uproar of shots and bombs resounded for five minutes. Then out came the Canadians, to the admiration of all, advancing as if on parade to their objective on the knuckle beyond the village.



Farther north the 28th Battalion reaching the head of the steep valley that ran towards the other flank—through Warfusée and thence along the rest of the Australian front—captured a battery of field-guns still firing through the mist on its S.O.S. lines. Farther north again the 27th was shot at point-blank from the same valley by another battery. The gunners, however, quickly surrendered to tanks and infantry.

These were batteries of the 79th F.A.R. (41st Divn.⁴⁹) of which four lay between Marcelcave and Warfusée. The 5.9 battery was the 5/15th Foot Arty. Of four batteries and their brigade headquarters only one officer and two N.C.O's escaped.

The terror created by the tanks emerging from the mist was most evident at this stage. On the southern edge of Warfusée

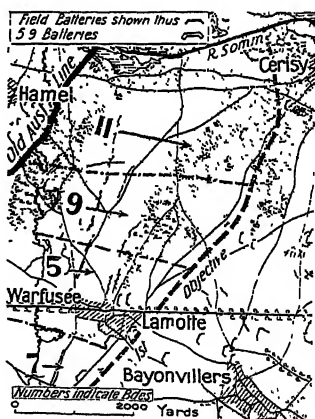
⁴⁸ Capt. C. R. Percy-Eade, M.C.; 2nd Bn., Tank Corps (formerly 10th Bn., Durham Light Infy.). Lawyer; of Somersetshire, Eng.; b. Taunton, Somerset, 26 Feb. 1885.

⁴⁹ Most German field batteries comprised 4 guns, but some 6.

a couple of tanks and groups of the 17th Battalion under Capt. Harnett⁵⁰ and his company sergeant-major, N. J. Dulhanty,⁵¹ Capts. Mackenzie and Finlay,⁵² Lieut. Maynard,⁵³ and others dived into the gully, skirting the back-gardens, some of them chasing with their fire about 100 fugitive Germans. With Harnett leading they seized some guns and prisoners in the valley; on reaching the farther crest Harnett came suddenly upon two German 5.9-inch howitzers, whose crews were firing over open sights at the 7th Brigade farther south; 45 German artillerymen and one battery commander, completely surprised, were captured.

The German official monograph notes that no member of this battery (the 2/151st Foot Artillery) escaped.

North of Warfusée the 18th Battalion (5th Bde.) found two field batteries abandoned,⁵⁴ and farther north the 33rd and 34th found one⁵⁵—it had been firing, but the gunners, doubtless overawed by the tanks, were now sitting on the trails, apparently waiting to be captured. Several ammunition limbers were in the valley, their teams killed by the barrage. Farther down a party of the 35th under Lieut. Wyndham, beginning to climb the eastern slope, saw thirty men led by an officer on horseback coming out of the mist and down the valley behind them. The officer at once wheeled his men eastwards to



⁵⁰ Brig. E. T. Harnett, V.D.; 17th Bn. Shipping Clerk; of Newcastle, N.S.W.; b. Drummoyne, N.S.W., 19 May 1891.

⁵¹ Sgt. (tempy. C.S.M.) N. J. Dulhanty (No. 1924; 17th Bn.). Farmer; of Bathurst, N.S.W.; b. Wellington, N.S.W., 5 Aug. 1892. Killed in action, 31 Aug. 1918.

⁵² Capt. C. C. Finlay, 17th Bn. Medical student; of Marrickville, N.S.W.; b. Stroud, N.S.W., 16 Sep. 1894.

⁵³ Lt. C. R. Maynard, 17th Bn. Clerk; of Cremorne, N.S.W.; b. Petersham, N.S.W., 1 Mar. 1887.

⁵⁴ The 3 and 4/58th F.A.R., 13th Div.

⁵⁵ The 5/58th F.A.R. It was really in the next battalion's sector.

escape up the fold near "Hazel Wood," but Wyndham's party shot his horse, and captured him and his men.

These were artillerymen—almost certainly part of the crews of the two abandoned batteries found by the 18th Bn. The German monograph notes that 29 of their members were missing.

Nearer the Somme the 41st Battalion, diving into the valley near where it opened to Cérisy,⁵⁶ captured two more batteries.⁵⁷ The 42nd seized and guarded the numerous river bridges and the lock at Gailly, where the river could be crossed although the concrete bridge had been broken.⁵⁸ The battalion then dug round the foot of the spur facing Cérisy and the Somme.

It was 6.10 a.m.—half an hour late—when Capt. Jack's⁵⁹ company of the 42nd was placed on its objective. Ten minutes later it found touch with its neighbours in the mist. The 41st was digging in by 7 o'clock—nearly an hour after time-table. The 9th Brigade reached the objective at different times

On the
"Green
Line"

between 6.50 and 7.15—the barrage had passed there at 6.19. The 5th Brigade appears to have reached its objective at about 7—forty minutes behind the barrage. In the 7th Brigade, which met the strongest resistance but had level going almost the whole way, the 27th Battalion reached the objective at 6.30, the 28th at 6.55, and the 26th (its commander reported) as the barrage lifted from the objective—about 6.25 a.m. The lateness along the rest of the line was due to crossing more broken country in the dense fog. Only with the two flank guard companies that helped the Canadians had the departure from time-table been due to German resistance. Throughout this phase there was hardly any stubborn resistance—the fog had rendered it most difficult, and where the tanks appeared most of the Germans were terrified. As for their artillery, it had been so

⁵⁶ The 41st had to advance its right and centre diagonally across the valley, its left remaining on the near side. Lt.-Col. Heron had made his troops practice the operation on Aug. 6 on similar ground, roads and other features being represented by notice boards. The men knew they had to "keep their right shoulders forward."

⁵⁷ The 2 and 7/43rd Res. F.A.R., 43rd Res. Div. The 7th was a six-gun battery, and was disposed in two positions.

⁵⁸ At one stage a tank, heading straight for the river in the fog, was with great difficulty warned from that course by Lts. J. L. Tardent (Wynnum and Nanango, Q'land) and E. E. Paterson (Tiaro, Q'land).

⁵⁹ Capt. T. Jack, M.C.; 42nd Bn. Dental student; of New Farm, Brisbane, Q'land; b. New Farm, 8 Aug. 1895. Killed in action, 12 Aug. 1918.

smothered by the British counter-batteries and by the fog that its reply was negligible, and caused only trifling loss to most of the units that it touched—chiefly in the leap-frogging divisions.⁶⁰ The advance was the most bloodless ever made by Australian infantry in a great battle—Capt. Jack's company of the 42nd had no casualties, and Capt. Warry's, on the Somme flats beside it, only one; the average in this first stage was apparently well under 50—ten per cent. of rifle strength—in each of the eleven attacking battalions. On the German side the number of killed and wounded was probably less—one Australian, who closely followed the attack, saw, on his way to the final objective and back, hardly one man dead, of either side, and very few wounded—a condition undoubtedly due in the early hours to the fog. He also saw practically no German defences—trenches or wire-entanglement—a circumstance that was the talk of the elated troops as they dug in along the misty spur or "went through" the prisoners for souvenirs before directing them, with or without escort, to the rear.

What had been achieved at such slight cost no one on either side could yet guess, but obviously a considerable part of the German front-line garrison and a number of his guns had been captured. With the field of view increasing, the Australian officers were busy with a quick and thorough redistribution of their intermingled companies. Several German posts and batteries found close in front of the objective were seized by "peaceful penetration." Hamilton Wood, immediately ahead of the 3rd Division, was evidently full of Germans—a tank together with a party of the 41st under Lieut. Lawson⁶¹ went straight into it and brought out 200 prisoners (infantry and artillerymen). At Warfusée a young tank officer took his machine, followed by Capt. Finlay with a party of the 17th, out on to the plateau ahead to seize a battery of 4.2-inch guns which had stopped firing and been abandoned by their crews.⁶²

⁶⁰ In the field artillery positions the 14th Bde., A.F.A., had caught fairly heavy shelling before "zero" (evidently associated with the German bombardment for the raid at 3.30 a.m.). Maj. N. L. Dreyer (Kogarah, N.S.W.) had been mortally wounded. In the 6th Bde., A.F.A., the 106th Bty. was heavily shelled shortly after the attack started, having three howitzers put out of action.

⁶¹ Lt. J. B. Lawson, M.C.; 41st Bn. Clerk; of Townsville, Q'land; b. Edentown, Fifeshire, Scotland, 1892. Killed in action, 29 Sep. 1918.

⁶² Apparently the 6/59th. The German official monograph says that it had shot away its ammunition.



23. WAITING TO START IN THE SECOND PHASE, 8TH AUGUST, 1918

Troops of the 5th Australian Division, tank, and guns in the valley north of Warfusée-Abancourt (which can be seen in the distance). The long Mark V* tank would be used in the third stage.

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No. E3883.

To face p. 544.



24. A TANK GOING THROUGH ON THE ROMAN ROAD, 8TH AUGUST, 1918

Passing one of the fallen trees that formed obstacles on the road. Behind the tank officer who is riding on the machine are a fascine, for filling trenches, and two bridges.

Aust War Memorial Official Photo, No. E2862.

To face p. 545.

The tank hitched up one gun and, though twice hit by another battery half a mile beyond, near Bayonvillers, brought it back. The batteries at Bayonvillers and behind the trees near the Roman road were beyond the protective barrage, and fired at the 2nd Division digging in, and caused some casualties in both it and the 5th now arriving in rear to assemble for the second advance. But more troublesome was the protective barrage itself, which fell short along most of the 2nd Division's line. Part of the 7th Brigade had to be withdrawn 300 yards, the 5th Brigade about 50 yards.⁶³ The two leap-frogging divisions were then arriving out of the mist after much difficulty in finding their way. Down near Hamel the supports (43rd Bn.) could hear the clinking of chains along the Hamel-Cérisy road and knew that part of the artillery, having finished its rôle in the creeping barrage, was there in the fog, punctual to timetable. The fog made any effort by the contact airmen (of No. 3 Squadron, A.F.C.) worse than useless⁶⁴ and they were not sent out, though—in case the precaution might help—other machines of the squadron dropped their smoke bombs to screen the digging troops from the Germans at Cérisy. Since 5 o'clock two or three German aeroplanes had tried to penetrate the fog—one dropped three bombs on Lieut. Punch's section of the 53rd Battery, A.F.A., as it was moving off to support the 15th Infantry Brigade;⁶⁵ another appeared out of the mist close above the troops waiting on the first objective.

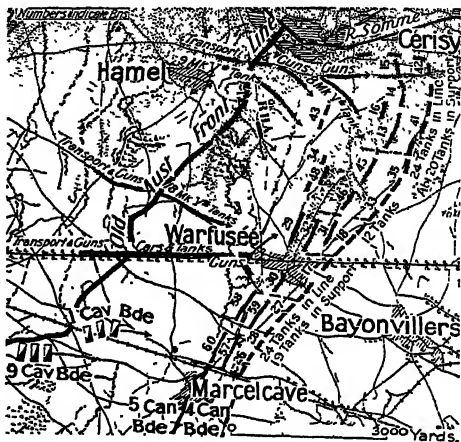
Then, at 8 o'clock, the mist lifted like a curtain, gradually disclosing a scene that will never be forgotten by any who saw it. The Somme valley came into view, the gentle sunlight, still tempered by the haze, bathing the steep wooded slopes and folds of the northern riverside and the more gradual, long, grass- or wheat-covered spurs of the southern. It was to these spurs and the plateau to which they rose that all eyes now turned. On the long flat top of the finger east of the "Long Gully" from Lamotte to Cérisy, and across the summit of the Villers-

⁶³ The 7th Bde. after digging in thinned its front by withdrawing the 28th Bn. to the old Amiens line.

⁶⁴ Any attempted report as to the line by airmen might have been highly misleading, whereas the ground reports were quick and sure. Orderlies of the 13th Light Horse were constantly used this day as despatch riders.

⁶⁵ The bombs killed 4 men and wounded 6 and killed or wounded 16 horses. All were at once replaced and the section moved at 6.43 a.m. without serious delay.

Bretonneux plateau until lost to sight, were scattered parties of Australian infantry, some still digging, others looking out from their new-dug trenches, others strolling or standing between the groups in the easy attitude by which Australians were recognisable on all their battlefields since the first sunrise at Anzac. Behind them was every arm of the Fourth Army's offensive in motion. First, in rear of the spur on which the line was digging, were the infantry of the 5th and 4th Divisions, mostly assembling under the forward edge of the Long Gully. Beside them, or sometimes still filing across country from the nearest road, like elephants accompanying an Oriental army, were processions of the tanks, sixty machines in all, that were allotted for those divisions, many having the colours of their infantry painted on their sides or on plaques hung by chains from their fronts. Farther back in the gully about forty other tanks, which had already taken part in the first phase, were assembling to follow and assist in the second.⁶⁶ Behind these, crowding chiefly along the Hamel-Cérisy road in the Somme valley, and the Roman road along the plateau, came battery after battery of field and horse artillery, chains jingling, horses' heads and manes tossing. Partly with these, and partly in streams across the open, rolled the ammunition waggons, water-waggons, and waggons with engineer stores hurriedly packed to replace those lost in the carrier tanks twelve hours before.



⁶⁶ The tanks for this stage comprised, from left to right, two companies of the 8th Tank Bn. (B and A) leading the 4th Div.; A Coy., 13th T. Bn., and A Coy., 8th T. Bn., leading the 5th Div. In the centre, to strengthen the junction of 4th and 5th Divisions, went C Coy., 8th T. Bn. Behind the 8th T. Bn., with the 4th Div., went about 20 tanks of B and C, 13th T. Bn., survivors from the previous stage. Similarly 19 tanks of B and C, 2nd T. Bn., supported the 5th Div.'s tanks, bringing the total to 99.

Parties of pioneers⁶⁷ and engineers who had pushed out along the roads as soon as the advance started were still at work upon them, and others were making trench-crossings for the artillery. At 7.40 the first of sixteen armoured cars entered Warfusée where tanks towed them over the hurriedly cleared débris. Behind them came motor lorries and even touring cars. On either side of that village the whole 5th Division was ranged in deep artillery formation. In rear, near "Card Copse," stood the whole 1st Brigade of cavalry in mass,⁶⁸ with about 100 tanks, mostly whippets, for the final phase. A great shout went up as some of the field batteries, allotted to help the foremost troops, arrived at a gallop and in a few minutes their guns were banging, to the delight of the troops. In the opposite direction moved a few lame tanks, and, along the roads, droves of prisoners moved wide-eyed through the throng, astonishment evident in their faces. The attacking troops were in grand spirit—the casualties were obviously few, the prisoners in thousands, and in most parts hardly a German shell had fallen since the attack. "You won't see him, 15th, you won't catch him," said men of the 42nd Battalion to those of the 15th who were now to pass through.

Not only British observers held their breath as the mist unfolded this pageant. As many of their histories tell, Germans also, on the hills north of the river and elsewhere, gazed for a moment in wonder as the receding haze disclosed this panorama. This was the sight that the French and British—and among them the Australians—had steadily looked for through four years of unbelievable trial. Now; as an officer of the 25th Battalion (carrying stores for the 7th Brigade) afterwards said, "It all looked a certain, confident success."

At 8.20, simultaneously with Canadian brigades farther south, the 5th and 4th Australian Divisions moved through.

Along three-quarters of their front there now faced them the high open plain of Santerre, on which stood to the south-east two wooded villages to be reached in the day's attack—Bayonvillers a mile

**The
Second Phase**

⁶⁷ On the Hamel-Cérisy road was the 3rd Pion. Bn., assisted by part of the 9th, 10th, and 13th Fld. Coys. On the Roman road were the 5th Pions. and 5th Fld. Coy. The 2nd Pions. worked on other tracks—within two hours one platoon, under Lt. W. C. O'Toole (Ryde, N.S.W.), often under fire managed to repair 7,000 yards of road.

⁶⁸ Plate 518, Vol. XII, shows part of this cavalry farther on near Harbonnières.

ahead, and behind it Harbonnières, two and a half miles farther. Across most of the front two and a half miles away ran a steep valley, from Morcourt, hidden in the Chipilly bend of the Somme, almost to Harbonnières, south of which another valley dipped to the Luce. But this hollow (which will be called in this chapter, as then, "Morcourt valley," though Morcourt actually lay at the mouth of a small gully west of it) could not yet be seen by the advancing troops; and though three miles beyond Morcourt valley the plateau was again crossed by a second, much longer and wider, depression, Froissy valley, the surface seemed to stretch level and unbroken to the horizon.

This ground was much flatter than that now facing the neighbouring Canadians.⁶⁹ while the British north of the Somme were confronted by several steep gullies. The ground ahead of the Australians



was comparable only on the front of their left brigade where it was broken by the indentations leading to the Somme, in the bends of which lay the successive villages of Cérisy, Morcourt, and Méricourt.⁷⁰

The three miles' advance to the second objective—drawn on the map as a "Red Line" beyond Morcourt valley but short of Harbonnières—had to be made by the infantry without the assistance of a creeping barrage. Instead the infantry would be helped by the tanks, and by a number of field artillery brigades which had come forward on finishing their task on the barrage. The general arrangement was to attach a brigade of field or horse artillery to follow closely each infantry brigade in the second and third phases. These again were followed in

⁶⁹ An account of the 15th Aust. Bde. says that the Canadians at this stage "met more resistance and had to attack over more difficult country. Their area was marked by numerous woods, copses, and gullies."

⁷⁰ Méricourt was just beyond the day's objective.

each division by three other field artillery brigades charged with the defensive task of covering the Red Line when captured. From most of the first batch of artillery a few guns were detached to follow closely the attacking battalions and shell any obstacles that the infantry pointed out. The heavy artillery had to bombard villages, valleys, cross-roads, and other important points ahead of the attack until stated hours, and aeroplanes to drop smoke-bombs at fixed times in front of certain villages and ridges from which fire might trouble the tanks and infantry. At different times from 6 o'clock onwards the supporting batteries hurried to the first objective.⁷¹

The 4th and 5th Divisions moved with their allotted tanks ahead. About twenty yards behind the tanks came the line of scouts and some hundred yards behind these the leading companies of each battalion, two or three lines of tiny columns in file, well spaced out, with the supporting companies and battalions in larger columns disposed diamond-wise in rear, the whole making a widely spaced band, half a mile deep, of little groups moving evenly forward. Each tank this day carried at least one scout or observer from the infantry battalion that it worked with; but as the tanks went faster than the companies they quickly increased their lead to as much as 300 yards.

As soon as the movement began German machine-guns chattered from various parts of the front, but as the tanks advanced the gun-crews started up here and there from their cover and fled back like game driven by advancing beaters. Where some crew persisted in firing the nearest tank usually went straight at it, firing its 6-pounders or machine-guns. In most of these cases when the monster came within 100 yards the Germans leapt out, raised their hands above their heads, and waited to be collected—and, if time allowed, ransacked for souvenirs—by the infantry. The German infantry were well

⁷¹ See Vol. XII plate 512. Some of them then wheeled into some position behind it and opened fire on any suitable target. Thus at 8.4 the 49th Bty. (of the 13th A.F.A. Bde., supporting the 15th Inf. Bde.) came into action at the head of the valley south of Warfusée. As early as 6.30 Lt. K. J. Jones's section of the 51st Bty., attached to the 8th Bde., opened from the south-western corner of Warfusée, scattering a cluster of Germans on the plateau north of the Roman road. It then moved forward north of the village to a position immediately behind the "Green Line" and fired on other parties and retiring transport. Down near the Somme shortly after 7 o'clock batteries of the 10th A.F.A. Bde. (supporting the 4th Inf. Bde.) unlimbered on the end of the long knuckle above Gailly and on the slope towards the river and fired through the mist at the valleys and roads ahead.

aware of their opponents' proclivities, for some posts actually had their watches or other articles ready before the troops came up.⁷²

On the Australian front except on the left the only real resistance at this stage came from the German artillery. The right division, the 5th, advancing on the Santerre plateau, met this from the start. The German batteries that had been shooting direct at the right brigade (15th) as it assembled, and had caused its left to draw back into shelter, now blazed at tanks and infantry from the moment they emerged. Here a few Australian field-guns, that had galloped up just before the start, were able to help the tanks for a short while by throwing a barrage ahead of them,⁷³ and some of the German gunners at this stage shot wildly. In the southward-leading depression across whose head the 15th Brigade advanced, just north of the railway a 5.9-inch howitzer⁷⁴ opened on the three tanks leading the 57th Battalion. The experience was new to the troops.

As the shells tore past (wrote Capt. McKenna⁷⁵) each one of us imagined that they were passing within a foot of him. They struck the hillside behind us.

The centre tank went straight for the gun, firing its 6-pounders and machine-guns. When eighty yards away it was hit, but the two others followed by infantry were then well up on either flank and the Germans fled to cover where they were captured. Farther north a battery of German field-guns was firing on the left battalion (59th) of the brigade as it moved down the gentle slope. Two little section columns were almost destroyed, and then another, whereupon some of the section commanders extended

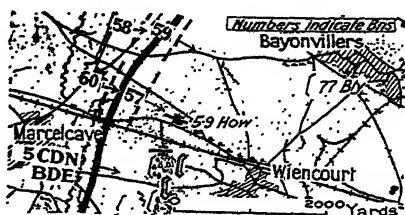
⁷² The "souveniring" process, in which there was little, if any, real harm, took the place of the terrible plundering on the Napoleonic and earlier battlefields. Field glasses, watches, knives, pistols, or smaller articles were prized genuinely as souvenirs. The keenness for them was probably strongest among Australian troops, who were always tourists in spirit; but, though it gave the troops an added interest in the operations, it was recognised as a military fault, diverting men's attention from their duties and sometimes causing delay. Orders were frequently issued by divisional or lower commanders that such interference with duties must not be permitted. The front-line troops had a half-serious complaint that it was the reserves and ancillary troops that obtained most of the souvenirs.

⁷³ See pp. 545 and 547. The smoke bombs dropped by aeroplanes, according to programme, in front of the villages were also useful.

⁷⁴ Of the 8/15th Foot Arty. (41st Div.), which had howitzers each side of the railway.

⁷⁵ Lt.-Col. J. J. McKenna; 57th Bn. Clerk; of Coburg, Vic.; b. Carlton, Vic., 24 Aug. 1893.

their men into line.⁷⁶ Two of the tanks ahead of the 59th manoeuvred to outflank this battery and managed to drive its gunners under cover. Lieut. McKay⁷⁷ set a Lewis gunner to keep them there. The tanks moved on and McKay's platoon rushed the position and killed or captured its occupants.⁷⁸ As the 59th brushed round the south of Bayonvillers it was fired on from the houses, but two machine-guns under Lieut. Hanna suppressed



First objective shown thus —

this fire. The forward battalions passed on, leaving to the 58th and some tanks the taking of the village.⁷⁹

The advance to this stage had been very fast, and on crossing the German military railway at the south-eastern end of the village the whole 15th Brigade had to halt as the shells of its own heavy artillery were still falling on the rise beyond. On the right the 57th Battalion had been hampered from the start by shells from the supporting artillery which had fallen short at every stage, killing some men and wounding others.⁸⁰ The right rear battalion of the brigade, the 60th, had been closely watching the front south of the railway, where the 5th Canadian Brigade, which had now leap-frogged the 4th, was meeting

⁷⁶ This experience of the 59th threw light on the much disputed question as to the usefulness of "artillery formation" in bombardment. For merely avoiding casualties it was no better than any other, and when, as here, the enemy guns were close and firing direct the chance of their raking a file of men with a single shot might become too great to accept. The same reason made it impossible in small arms fire. But in ordinary bombardment the much greater mobility of the columns in file, and the marked advantages in control and manoeuvre, rendered this formation invaluable and highly favoured by officers and men.

⁷⁷ Lt. J. H. McKay, 59th Bn. Station overseer; of Warren, N.S.W.; b. Warren, 22 Sep. 1894.

⁷⁸ This was the 6/27th F.A.R. (117th Div.).

⁷⁹ Lt. Hanna and his party attacked and captured some of the Germans who fired on the 59th. The 58th went straight at the village with two tanks. The Germans in the cellars there offered no resistance: Capt. Loughnan's company captured 92, and Capt. J. S. Tait's 30. Lt. E. L. Stephenson, intelligence officer of the battalion, coming round a corner with two prisoners, was accidentally fired on and wounded by a tank. Some field-guns were captured here. (Loughnan belonged to East Melbourne; Tait to Dandenong, Vic.; Stephenson to St. Annes-on-Sea, Lancs., Eng.)

⁸⁰ Apparently shells from 4.5-inch howitzers and from 60-pounders. Between 8.50 and 9.40 a.m. Lt.-Col. Denehy (57th) sent three successive messages by pigeon to have this corrected. He was about to ask that the heavy artillery should cease fire altogether, when the trouble was traced by the artillery and remedied.

much greater difficulty. At the start of the second phase the Australian right had seen the Canadians held by German heavy batteries at Pieuret Wood.⁸¹ The German gunners were clearly visible and Lieut. Money of the 57th lined two platoons along the cutting⁸² at Wiencourt railway bridge and opened with Lewis guns and rifles at the nearer batteries. Several Germans there fell and the rest ran.⁸³ The Australians watched with admiration the tanks audaciously attacking this wood.

But the advance here continued to be difficult for the Canadians. As the staff of the Australian Corps now knew,⁸⁴ the Canadian centre and left centre were being faced by a completely fresh German division, the 117th, with companies 200 strong ("one of the freshest and most battleworthy divisions of the German Army," as the German monograph says), which was just completing the relief of the tired 109th.⁸⁵ And at this stage adjoining the south of the railway there confronted the Canadian left two villages, Wiencourt and Guillaucourt, each at the head of a valley descending to the Luce. On the open Australian front the enemy had cover only in the factory buildings north of Guillaucourt and in the dumps of timber and wire and the unloading platforms of the German military railways and tramways that gridironed the fields there.⁸⁶

During the halt many of the 15th Brigade pulled out their breakfasts; and it was during this wait that the leading regiment of the 1st Cavalry Brigade, whose task was to seek an opportunity to break into German territory from the Australian front, came up north and south of Bayonvillers.⁸⁷ The leading squadron south of Bayonvillers now passed through, sending ahead two patrols, each of a dozen men, along the track south of the main road to Harbonnières. British shells, still falling

⁸¹ German records show that in or beside this wood there were two batteries of 5.9-inch howitzers, one of 5.9-inch guns, and three of field-guns.

⁸² Some Canadians also were with Money.

⁸³ One was seen to rush back to his gun and fire another shell. He then fled but was cut off by the leading Canadians.

⁸⁴ They heard it at 7.37 a.m. through prisoners captured by the 2nd Aust. Div.

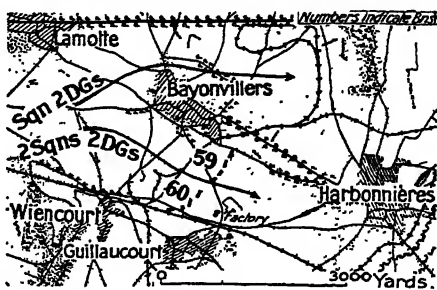
⁸⁵ In 1916 the 117th had met the first Australian attack at Pozières. It was then considered only a moderately good division, but it had now received four months' rest waiting for Rupprecht's offensive.

⁸⁶ One big dump was on fire at several points.

⁸⁷ The report of the 1st Cav. Bde. states that the leading squadrons were at this point at 8.30 and south-west of Harbonnières at 9.15; but these times are obviously wrong by about an hour. At 8.30 even the leading tanks were only half-way to Bayonvillers. A message of the 57th Bn. shows that the cavalry passed the dumps between Wiencourt and Bayonvillers at 9.40.

on the rise ahead of the infantry, burst among the cavalry and killed or wounded several men and horses. Close on the patrols pressed one of the whippet tanks attached to the cavalry. A few machine-guns chattered from the factory and huts north of Guillaucourt, but were quickly suppressed by the wheeling, galloping cavalry patrols, by tanks, and by the infantry which now advanced, munching its breakfast as it went.⁸⁸ From this point onward the enemy

on the 15th Brigade's front was tackled by the cavalry of which a larger body now galloped through on either flank of the brigade. "Give it them cavalry," shouted the Diggers as the horsemen headed for the valley south of Harbonnières, where



they were soon seen holding up German transport and parties of infantry. The 15th Brigade followed till it reached part of the open fields west of that large village. Here was placed the second objective—the Red Line—and here at 10.15 for a few minutes the brigade halted.

Part of the 60th Battalion, the right rear of the brigade, was again detained to guard the right flank where German machine-guns in Guillaucourt village had checked the Canadian advance. A couple of platoons of the 60th lined the railway bank. South of the railway the Canadian infantry was lying farther back facing the village across the dip in which part of the 9th Cavalry Brigade was assembling. In two rough lines the cavalry charged straight at the place, but the fire from the houses caused them to wheel round just as they reached it and retire to the dip where they re-formed and repeated the process. This was done three times; by then whippet and "Mark V" tanks also were approaching the village. Germans began to

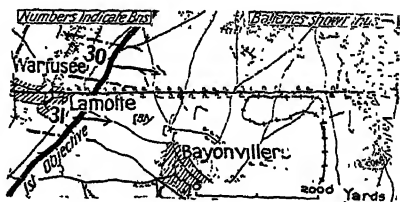
⁸⁸ Twelve Germans were killed here and 40 captured by Capt. Peacock's company of the 57th. A tank made for the buildings north of Guillaucourt while the infantry went round them; 52 prisoners and a trench-mortar battery were captured there.

bolt from it and the cavalry and whippets quickly came through it trying to catch them.

The stand east and south-east of Wiencourt was made by the "rest" battalions of the three regiments of the 117th Divn. Two had been sent up by the division from Harbonnières and the third had advanced from Guillaucourt. The brigade commander managed to unite them here, but "again," says the monograph, "the situation was decided by an envelopment on the north." The northern battalion gave way first, then the centre, finally the left.⁸⁹

The Canadians' Red Line lay just east of Guillaucourt. The task of seizing and temporarily holding the next objective of the Canadian Corps lay with the cavalry.

The left brigade of the 5th Australian Division, the 8th, was the only one in the Fourth Army which, on part of its front, had a completely level, straightforward advance to the final objective.⁹⁰ It attacked with two battalions, followed by one in support and one in reserve, and, except for having to skirt the north of Bayonvillers and, just before the Red Line, the head of Morcourt valley, the task of its right battalion, the 31st, was a march of five miles without natural obstacle. The brigade started slightly ahead of the 15th, and as soon as the line of tanks pushed over the crest at the starting line, a German field battery, which from half a mile ahead had been shooting at the digging troops, turned upon the machines and in quick succession hit six.⁹¹ A seventh made straight for the guns and had almost reached them when it was squarely hit. The fire then ceased; a few minutes later, as the infantry reached the guns, a number of Germans, evidently their crews, who had been lying in a turnip field, stood up and surrendered.



This was the 6th Bty. of the 58th F.A.R. (13th Divn.). The Germans noted that the British artillery avoided firing on the Roman

⁸⁹ They were supported by one battery, the 6/233rd, which had been resting.

⁹⁰ See Vol. XII, plate 513.

⁹¹ Apparently observers had been up the trees searching above the smoke for the tanks.

road as the British themselves would require to use it later. Two of the guns were hit in the barrage. As soon as it ceased two others were pulled out of their pits. The regimental history describes how the tanks appeared one after another and the lines of troops in khaki; how the first shot caused the line of infantry to stop, waver, and scatter; and how the two guns (under Vice Sgt.-Maj. Reese) hit six tanks, but one came straight at them firing until it actually reached the hedge of the sunken road in front of the battery. There it was hit. The crews now tried to escape, but the infantry was now close and even some gunners who presently reached Bayonvillers found Australians there and were captured.

Half a mile beyond this battery, at the entrance of Bayonvillers, a battery of 4.2's⁹² still fired on the tanks, hitting three before the infantry was within 500 yards. It happened that behind these Australians was one of the cavalry's whippet tanks—the same that afterwards followed the cavalry's first patrols—under an adventurous youngster, Lieut. Arnold.⁹³ He afterwards wrote to his commander:

To my immediate front I could see. . . . Mark V tanks being followed very closely by Australian infantry. . . . We came under direct shellfire from a 4-gun field battery of which I could see the flashes between Abancourt and Bayonvillers. Two Mark V tanks on my right front were knocked out. I turned half-left and ran diagonally 600 yards. Both my (machine-) guns were able to fire on the battery in spite of which they got off about eight rounds at me. . . .

The bursts were close but he reached unhurt a screen of trees beside a road. Racing along behind this he presently emerged beyond the battery whose gunners, finding themselves between tank and infantry, bolted.

Gunner Ribbans⁹⁴ and I accounted for the whole lot (says the report). I cruised forward making a détour to the left and shot a number of the enemy who appeared to be demoralised and were moving about the country in all directions. . . . I could now see other whippets coming up and a few Mark V's also. The Australian infantry, who followed magnificently, had now passed through the battery position. . . .

This German battery left the 31st Battalion only one Mark V tank, which, however, continued to head for the enemy wherever he showed. The battalion was fired on from Bayonvillers but went straight on, only its right flank entering the

⁹² Probably the 4/27th F.A.R., which stood here with the 5/27th and 1/79th F.A.R.

⁹³ Lt.-Col. C. B. Arnold, D.S.O.; 6th Bn., Tank Corps (afterwards R.F.A., Territorial Army); of Llandudno, North Wales; b. Llandudno, 8 Feb. 1894.

⁹⁴ Gnr. C. Ribbans, 6th Bn., Tank Corps. Accountant; of Addlestone, Surrey, Eng.; b. Addlestone, 1 Nov. 1892.

village and holding back to keep contact during the halt of the 15th Brigade. Beyond the village a single German field battery (the 1/79th) retired slowly along the road to Harbonnières, keeping 1,000 yards ahead and unlimbering and firing at intervals. The Lewis gunners managed to shoot one of its teams and the Germans had to leave a gun on the road.⁹⁵ Near Harbonnières were other batteries retiring in the same way, and from the left front came scattered rifle shots from groups of men withdrawing along the Roman road. South of Harbonnières a German balloon was being hurriedly towed off by its motor waggon. The 31st advanced at a sharp walking pace, the men being forbidden to stand about dugout entrances or pick up curios. Finally from the scrub marking the head of Morcourt valley on the left came machine-gun fire, the first serious opposition that the battalion had received.

The same thing was happening at that moment to the three battalions on its left. The left battalion of the 5th Division (the 30th) and the 12th Brigade of the 4th Division, advancing on an area in which the rearward tiers of German artillery were hidden in the heads of the gullies leading to the Somme, were not subjected to their fire.⁹⁶ As the 30th gradually crossed the Roman road a single anti-tank gun opened fire from the southern side of the highway, but the crew was driven from it by Lewis gun fire. The line of tanks was unbroken and both here and at a few points on the front of the 12th Brigade where machine-guns fired too strongly to be ignored, the infantry lay down while the nearest tank went at them. As soon as they were silent the troops rose again and the advance continued. The 46th Battalion, which only on its left had to cross the dips at the heads of the valleys leading to the Somme, made very fast progress. At "Lena Wood" in the first gully, and again at "Susan Wood" in the second, and at hastily dug trenches at "Jean Wood" in the third, a splutter of rifles or machine-guns broke out, but the tanks and the swift following Victorians completely overawed the enemy, group after group of whom surrendered. Farther north the 45th had to cross steeper parts of these valleys, mostly some 120 feet in depth,

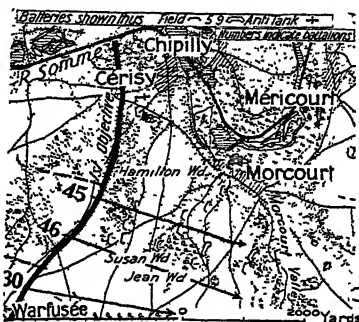
⁹⁵ The rest shot away their shells and retired to Rosières for more.

⁹⁶ Some field-guns in the half-wooded gully immediately ahead of the first objective fired at the 45th Bn. before the start, but the gunners had run before the battery was reached.

but its advance was only slightly less rapid, and it captured twenty-nine guns.⁹⁷

A map in the German official monograph shows that the heads of the two valleys south of Cérisy and Morcourt, and the middle course of the long Morcourt valley, contained, mostly around the edges of their woods, no less than thirteen batteries or parts of batteries of the 13th Divn. and of the two divisions (43rd Reserve and 108th) whose change-over was then in progress astride of the Somme. These ranged from 77's in the forward valleys to 8-inch howitzers in the rear ones, and around them were the bivouacs of the staffs and gunners.

The leading companies of the 45th skirted each wood, leaving the rear companies to mop it up. At the second gully—at which, on a knuckle, lay Susan Wood—a tank of the 45th found the far side too steep to climb, and consequently, with the rest of the 45th's tanks, turned southwards on to the 46th's front. But the 45th was able to cross both branches of that valley unaided, passing at the bottom a thin belt of low wire—one of the few obstacles encountered this day—and reached the edge of the long Morcourt valley while the shells of the British "heavies" were still bursting in there.



Here, as was noted above, both 8th and 12th Brigades met the first real resistance offered to the Australian centre since the garrison of the German front had been overwhelmed in the fog.⁹⁸ Except at the Roman road and south of it the tanks found this valley dangerously steep. One of them trying to descend the slope rolled over. For perhaps ten minutes the only way they could help their infantry was by lying along the valley's edge firing their 6-pounders and machine-guns.

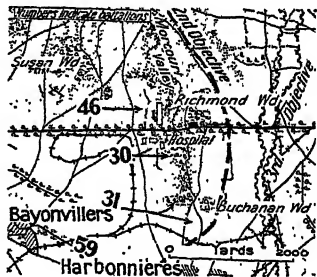
But two other circumstances assisted. First, as the 8th and 12th Brigades were nearing Morcourt valley the leading

⁹⁷ A private of the 45th with a pot of white paint and a brush was following on the heels of the attacking troops marking "Captured by 45th Bn., A.I.F." on each gun that he passed. At some gun-pits near "Hamilton Wood" several Germans surrendered to him.

⁹⁸ The 46th and 45th Bns. each carried out the first part of its advance with two companies, and then, at the road near "Valerie Wood," leap-frogged with their two rear companies, which attacked Morcourt valley.

British armoured cars⁹⁹ had raced through along the Roman road. After passing through Warfusée by 7.30, they had kept advancing along the road as far as the shells of the British "heavies" permitted, the trees lying across it being chopped through by their crews with axes or pulled aside by the towing tanks. After passing the infantry they fired, as they drove, at Germans retiring each side of the road, and on reaching Morcourt valley turned their machine-guns on the enemy seen there, causing some to leave their positions. Before the infantry arrived they had raced ahead into the German back area. Second, a brigade of Royal Horse Artillery, the 16th, trooping out almost on the heels of the infantry, had taken position at the edge of the second valley and opened fire on Morcourt valley. Machine-guns attached to the battalions also gave covering fire. The 46th was met by a fusillade from Germans lining the rim of the valley but its companies extended and, alternately throwing themselves down to give covering fire, and making short rushes, the sections advanced to the valley.

They found that, as expected, it had been a camping ground for German reserves. The valley sides were terraced with shelter bivouacs, huts for headquarters, and horse standings. It was over the top of a line of shelters on the highest terrace that the Germans were firing. Lieut. Hall¹⁰⁰ of the leading company was killed as with his whistle he controlled the rushes, but Capt. North of the following company and Lieut. Kemp¹ took charge. As the troops reached the valley's edge these Germans, fifty yards away, threw up their hands and the 46th hastened into the gully and up the other side on which lay "Richmond Wood" and, beside the main road, a red brick house. Fire had been coming from two machine-guns in a trench beside this house and from a tented hospital south of



⁹⁹ Of the 17th (Armoured Car) Tank Bn. See Vol. XII, plate 516.

¹⁰⁰ Lt. J. K. Hall, 46th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 14 June 1887. Killed in action, 8 Aug. 1918.

¹ Lt. A. P. P. Kemp, M.C.; 46th Bn. Grocer; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 19 Feb. 1897. Died 14 Oct. 1922.

the road; but a tank fired across the valley at the house, which began to burn. The right of the 46th seized it, the enemy fleeing, and at about 10 o'clock, some minutes ahead of timetable, the 46th climbed out on the plateau beyond, its second objective. Its neighbours were almost as quick. As already stated, the southernmost battalion of the 8th Brigade, the 31st, received fire from the shallow southern end of this gully. The battalion's one surviving tank nosed about the bushes and huts in it. A thousand yards to the left near the Roman road Germans were running about it like ants from a disturbed nest. Sending some Lewis gun teams to clear the scrub to its left front, and ignoring desultory shooting from the road the 31st moved to "Buchanan Wood" on the far side of the dip and drew breath there at 10.25 on its "Red Line."

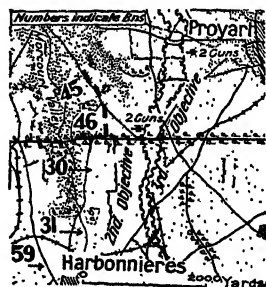
Immediately south of the road, in front of the 30th, the fire from the valley was sufficient to cause the support battalion, 32nd, heading into a gap between the 31st and 30th, to deploy and advance by rushes. Fortunately the gully here was passable for the five tanks that were still with the 30th; only two went round by the road, the other three crashing down through the undergrowth. The 46th was already among the hospital tents farther north and across the valley, and the Germans ahead of the 30th were unnerved. The tanks shot a dozen and the 30th collected the prisoners, 100 being sent back with one "Digger" as escort and 80 with another;² the 32nd captured over 100. Another score were found lying scared in the woods. The battalions went straight up the farther side of the valley, the 30th reaching its Red Line at 10.40.

The men of the 46th on reaching their objective could see Germans farther north firing at the 45th. Capt. Syme's company turned northwards to work around these, and some of the tanks were now coming down the valley from the Roman road. Ten minutes earlier the 45th, on approaching this valley while the British shells were still bursting there and Germans firing from its edge, had halted while the battalion intelligence officer, Lieut. Vincent,³ went on with six of his scouts (carrying

² When they were lined up one German asked in English whether they could visit their quartermaster's store. A "Digger" in charge replied: "As long as you don't run away you can do what you ——— well like." The prisoners then helped themselves to new uniforms, underclothing, and boots.

³ Lt. J. Vincent, M.C., D.C.M.; 45th Bn. Storeman; of North Sydney; b. North Sydney, 20 Oct. 1895.

As the 45th came into the valley the Germans whom Captain Syme of the 46th was outflanking surrendered. Climbing the farther slope Vincent now saw in a small wood on his left a German machine-gun crew intently firing upon the 46th. With Pte. Sellick⁵ he made towards it and hurled a bomb which burst thirty yards from the gun. Fifteen Germans surrendered.⁶ The 45th, which had not deployed throughout the attack, reached its Red Line—a road along the crest—at 10.19. Ahead was a patch of scrub known to contain some trenches. It was immediately searched and Germans were taken from the dugouts. About 1,000 largely without arms were fleeing northwards towards Méricourt. Two field-guns retiring just north of the Roman road, and two others ahead of the 45th, wheeled round and fired at half a mile's range into the tanks and the digging troops. Of the tanks, which were always particularly vulnerable while loitering to protect stationary troops, four were now hit. Two Lewis gunners of the 46th went out far towards the southern guns and silenced them; the northern pair were fired on by Lewis guns of the 45th and an attached machine-gun of the 13th Company, and they also withdrew.

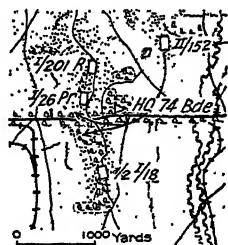


* One man ran out of the wood shouting: "Don't shoot me. I'm an Alsatian. Vive la France!"

a company of engineers, the I/26th, which had been marching up to relieve a sister company and happened to reach this valley when the bombardment fell there—the company then lined the western edge immediately north of the road; (3) one of the three reserve battalions of the 41st Divn., the II/152nd, less a company which had been kept forward at Warfusée. The divisional commander had heard by pigeon message that the 148th I.R. had been driven back, and, imagining the thrust to be a local one, had sent this, the nearest of his three reserve battalions, to reinforce. Reaching Morcourt valley by the Roman road, it met there, first singly, then in groups, men of the 13th Divn., mostly without arms, with news of the tank attack. "Every one is captured or dead!" they said. The red brick house (called by the Germans "Hussar Farm") was headquarters of the 74th Bde.,⁷ whose commander, thinking the 13th Divn. alone affected, approved of the battalion's continuing its advance. But just then arrived parties of the 41st Divn. including most of the II/152nd's own absent company. The battalion commander, Res. Capt. Weber, therefore lined his four companies along the edge of the valley, astride of the road.

Meanwhile among the retreating fragments had come Rittmeister von Kries, commander of the II/18th, who (as already described) had just managed to escape when the Australian flank companies took his headquarters at Jean Rouxin Mill. He was looking for the two resting companies of his regiment bivouacked in this valley some distance south of the road, but the heavy shelling had driven them into dugouts. He ordered the transport out of the valley. As the waggons cleared there was raised at the road a cry of "Tanks!" Three were seen approaching 300 yards to the right front, with infantry following. Intense machine-gun fire was concentrated on them, while the riflemen fired at the Australians, but the tanks came on steadily and when the leading ones were fifty yards away Res. Capt. Weber gave the II/152nd the order to withdraw to a trench on the east side of the valley. Being under sharp fire the troops ran, and, to stop them on the rear slope, the officers had to run faster, an action which increased the inevitable panic. (Doubtless this was the confusion observed by the 8th Bde.) Weber and another officer succeeded in establishing a line with two heavy machine-guns on the rear slope near the red house. The I/201st, which had just been ordered by the brigade commander to line the valley north of the I/152nd, is said to have been attacked by the tanks as it "deployed" (evidently these were the troops caught by Vincent and his scouts) and fell back across the valley also. The companies of the I/18th farther south, though not yet attacked, did the same.

At this juncture a German anti-aircraft gun on a motor lorry came quietly up along the Roman road, and, opening fire from beside the red house, quickly hit three tanks. Just then British aeroplanes dropped a succession of smoke bombs along the valley, screening the tanks. The gun then fired down the road, but when the attack reached the eastern side of the valley, and a tank and an armoured car came out



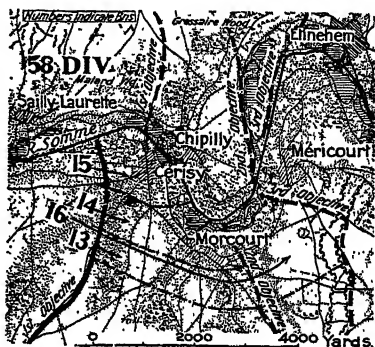
⁷ Commanding the infantry of the 41st Div.

of the smoke haze, it drove off swiftly eastwards.⁸ Cavalry being seen to the south, Kries ordered a company of the 18th to form a defensive flank. As often happened with over-strained troops, this movement started a general retirement. Kries managed to keep a few of the retiring men together but most of them scattered across the country. Apparently the whole I/201st was captured.⁹

By far the most difficult task on the Australian front in the second phase, as also in the third, was that of the 4th Brigade on the left flank. In the comparatively short advance from first to second objective it had to cross the steep riverside gullies and seize two villages, Cérisy and Morcourt. It covered

**4th
Brigade's
task**

its wide front by putting in at this stage three battalions, of which the 13th on the right by a happy arrangement advanced next to its daughter battalion, the 45th. In the centre went the 14th (parent of the 46th), which had to take in its stride Morcourt in the second gully. On the left, beside the Somme, the 15th had to seize Cérisy beyond the mouth of the first gully; if the III British Corps north of the river failed to take the Chipilly peninsula the 15th would have to hold the flank facing that protrusion, and in the third phase the 16th Battalion would have to advance beyond it. This contingency was in everyone's mind, partly because the task of the



III Corps had been rendered more difficult by the German attack of August 6th, partly because the projected advance of the III Corps, though much shorter than that of the Australians south of the river, would have to cross three steep gullies rendered more difficult by the presence of a number of woods of which two, Malard Wood at the first objective and Bois de Gressaire at the second, were over half a mile in width and nearly as deep. The diary of the 43rd Australian

⁸ Anti-aircraft Section 29. It had no more shells and its O.C. was wounded.

⁹ Its commander's report—that it had fired away its ammunition and then defended itself with bayonets and spades—seems to be pure romance.

Battalion, which looked out on that area from across the river, says:

We could not but say, "Well it is an area to take!" It was all woods, hills, and valleys and a couple of villages (which Fritz at any time took shifting out of) . . . a very tough proposition to tackle.

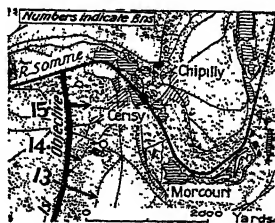
The 4th Brigade had just finished a difficult approach and assembly through the fog.¹⁰ But when on the stroke of time it came through,

in lines of sections in file (to quote from the records of the 41st Bn.) with rifles slung and the tanks between them, the 41st got up and cheered. Out ahead were tanks out by themselves dealing with machine-gun nests—by Cérisy a crackling of machine-guns now and then as they reached them; and the transport and artillery creeping up the road from the rear.

Cérisy village lay close ahead of the left flank, in the trees by the Somme at the end of the ridge that here formed the far side of the first valley that the brigade had to cross. High on this ridge opposite the left centre of the brigade could be seen half a mile away several German officers

walking quietly along the crest of that hill, and it looked (says a diary) as if serious trouble were ahead, from solidly held trenches.

Very sharp fire from there met the centre battalion (14th) as it moved out and began to descend the near slope. Capt. Harris, Lieut. Schutze,¹¹ and a number of men were hit, and the battalion flung itself down while some machine-guns of the 4th and 24th Companies¹² opened fire across the valley. Three tanks followed by the scouts of the 14th made for the Germans, who were in a knot of small trenches.¹³



¹⁰ All the battalions eventually came up the Hamel-Cérisy road, crowded with tanks going up and prisoners returning. On approaching the German hospital at Gailly the 14th turned off the road to the right, the 15th to the left, and the 13th passed to the right of the 14th. The last battalion, the 16th, lay behind the 13th, at "Kate Wood."

¹¹ Lt. H. J. A. Schutze, M.C.; 14th Bn. Electrical engineer; of St. Kilda, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, 12 May 1879.

¹² Lt. F. R. Watts (Condong, N.S.W.) of this company also was wounded here.

¹³ Equally troublesome to the 14th were the shells of one big British howitzer which regularly fell 1,500 yards short of their proper range, wounding Capt. H. C. Trumble (Middle Brighton, Vic.), medical officer of the battalion, and causing a dozen other casualties. Chaplain the Rev. F. W. Rolland (South Yarra and Noorat, Vic.) took charge of the medical detachment until Trumble's successor arrived from the field ambulance.

These Germans were Oberleutnant Spengler of the I/97th, who had fallen back from the first objective,¹⁴ and had collected in positions around a gravel pit three heavy machine-guns and some remnants of the neighbouring II/55th I.R.¹⁵ under its commander, Capt. von Klass. The German account says that the three tanks after circling the position and firing at its occupants went on, and the leading Australians were forced to fling themselves down or to retire. But after a considerable pause a tank came from the northern flank followed by a swarm of Australian infantry. Spengler, who had already lost one eye, was mortally wounded through the other, and his group was captured.

The 14th went on into the sunken road on top of the spur.

Meanwhile the right battalion (13th), which was here accompanied by only one tank,¹⁶ met no serious resistance.¹⁷ Its right and centre crossed three valleys almost without a casualty, and, (as one account says) the men were beginning to despair of obtaining a souvenir when, while waiting for the British shells to cease bursting in Morcourt valley, they caught sight of German transport along the other side of it, and of a line of picketed horses. A rich harvesting was clearly imminent.

But on the left the 14th, after passing the sunken road on top of Cérisy spur, had met new and stronger opposition; and the left company of the 13th and a company of the 4th Pioneers which, under Lieut. Storey,¹⁸ acted as part of the 13th throughout this attack, were accordingly held back by their commanders to cover the 13th's flank.¹⁹

The left battalion, the 15th, whose task was to capture Cérisy and the slope immediately above it, was helped by six tanks. Two German field-guns firing due west along the crowded Hamel-Cérisy road had made the approach difficult, but the gunners must now have fled, for the tanks reached Cérisy. One of them made straight for a mud-plaster build-

¹⁴ See pp. 539-40.

¹⁵ The support battalion next on the south.

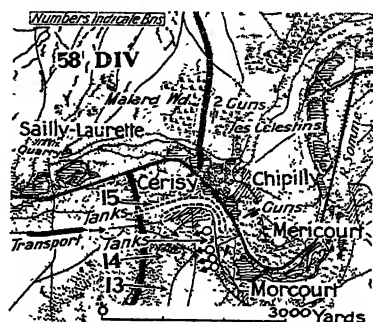
¹⁶ One did not arrive, and one immediately after starting hit a stump at Hamilton Wood in the first gully, and had to be left behind.

¹⁷ Only, however, because opposition was immediately tackled with great audacity. To cite two incidents out of many—when passing through a wheatfield on the spur south of Morcourt the line was fired on by a machine-gun. While the neighbouring men at once sheltered, Sgt. Sexton stood full height till he saw the flash of the gun and then hosed it with his Lewis gun from the hip until the Germans ceased fire. Cpl. E. Bourke rushed a machine-gun in similar circumstances. (Sexton, whose correct name was M. V. Buckley, belonged to Malvern, Vic.; Bourke to West Maitland, N.S.W.)

¹⁸ Capt. H. J. Storey, 4th Pion. Bn. Engineer; of Fullarton, S.A.; b. South Melbourne, 2 May 1894.

¹⁹ This was done on the decision of Capt. R. A. McKillop (Cooma, N.S.W.), commanding the left company of the 13th. A Lewis gun crew of the Pioneers under L.-Cpl. C. Heydon (Wallangarra, Q'land) was prominent here in silencing German machine-gunners.

ing at the entrance, pushed it down, and ran over it. The Germans in the village were too scared to resist as these monsters passed through, but on emerging at the far end the leading tanks found they would be jammed between the Somme and the steep bank of the spur. They therefore turned back and one after another crawled up the slope south of the village. The three companies of the 15th which were to take Cérisy and the river bank went through the houses, capturing several hundred Germans, but on moving to dig in on the flats around the village found themselves caught in the predicament they had been fearing, though half-expecting, from the outset: machine-guns opened on them at close range from across the river.²⁰ In addition, shells fired point blank from north of the river burst along the crowded Hamel road, which quickly cleared of traffic.



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It was seen that these shells came from two directions. High on the northern slope 1,000 yards from Cérisy, in les Célestins Wood, which the 58th British Division was to have captured at 8.20, two guns had been wheeled round and were shooting across the Somme valley as fast as the gunners could load; while low down at the northern edge of Chipilly village and from the trees on its southern edge near the Somme two other pairs of guns, only 800 yards ahead of the 15th, fired at its men emerging from Cérisy and coming over the height south of that place. The right company had climbed the bare spur south of the village with three tanks well ahead.²¹ As these tanks moved down the far side of the spur they were met by intense machine-gun fire from the high bank at its foot and by point-blank fire from the guns at Chipilly. They were quickly

²⁰ Earlier the 42nd Bn. on the left of the Green Line had been fired at by machine-guns in the quarry east of Sully-Laurette, but an Australian field-gun stopped this fire at 8 a.m.

²¹ Some of the tanks that led at this point seem to have been survivors from the first stage of the advance.

set on fire.²² Other tanks of the 15th now climbing the western side of the spur were put out of action by half a dozen rapid shots from the gunners in Célestins Wood. The right of the 15th and left of the 14th had hardly crossed the sunken road on the crest²³ when they were met by terrific machine-gun fire from the Germans lining the bank below.²⁴ Lieut. Shaw²⁵ and many men were killed. The line took cover in shell-holes, and shortly afterwards fell back to the sunken road. There, though two 4·2-inch guns north of the river burst their shells in direct enfilade along the road,²⁶ the companies held on. A private of the 24th Machine Gun Company²⁷ who had got his gun to the road bravely turned it on the German gunners, and four machine-guns of the 4th Company, under Sergt. Tyler,²⁸ brought up on limbers at a gallop,²⁹ tried to suppress the machine-guns that stopped the advance. A party of the 4th Light Trench Mortar Battery was asked to blow the enemy out, but had no ammunition.³⁰

This, the most stubborn resistance met by Australians on August 8, was due to the presence behind the high, steep bank along the foot of the eastern slope of this spur—one of the regular German rest camps—of the two reserve companies of the incoming 1/97th, fresh from their month's rest, as well as of the 1st Machine Gun Coy. of the outgoing 201st R.I.R. and several heavy machine-guns and the signallers of the 202nd R.I.R. At the northern end of the bivouac was the regimental headquarters of Maj. Kuhlwein von Rathenow, commander of the 202nd. Hearing at 6 a.m. of the attack, he with his staff and the company commanders had just time to rouse their troops, many of whom were asleep in the dugouts, and line them along the top of the bank.

²² Partly by trench-mortars, firing direct from the bank, partly by field-gun fire, partly (German accounts say) by the very gallant action of two infantrymen.

²³ Here Pte. A. G. Belbin (Lebrina, Tas.), 15th Bn., pushing ahead, captured three machine-guns.

²⁴ The 13th Bn., farther south, noted this "tremendous machine-gunning."

²⁵ Lt. B. J. Shaw, M.M.; 15th Bn. Printer; of Launceston, Tas.; b. 1895. Killed in action, 8 Aug. 1918.

²⁶ Though the southernmost German troops on the bank were nearly 500 yards from the 14th's flank, their fire was deadly. Lt. H. W. Thompson (Fitzroy, Vic.), after beckoning to them to surrender, saw one or two put up their hands and jumped out to bring them in. He was immediately shot through the head by the others, as was L.-Cpl. J. Howell (East Brunswick, Vic.), who gallantly allowed a Lewis gun to be fired resting on his shoulder.

²⁷ Pte. (afterwards Cpl.) R. C. Treloar, M.M. (No. 609; 24th M.G. Coy.). Grocery salesman; of Albert Park, Vic.; b. Auburn, Vic., 21 June 1891.

²⁸ Lt. H. B. Tyler, M.M.; 4th M.G. Coy. Labourer; of Yarram, Vic.; b. Melton, Vic., 1890.

²⁹ By Dvrs. P. E. Illingworth (Launceston, Tas.) and J. A. Smith (Perth, W.A.).

³⁰ Very few Stokes mortars were used during this day's advance. They were much hampered by the destruction of the carrier tanks. Guns of this battery, however, were used against enemy machine-guns.

Amid the bursts of the heavy British shells the first sign of the Australians' approach was the sound, coming from behind the Germans' right flank, of the first tank that pushed through Cérisy. The defenders at once faced to their rear. The mist was still too thick to see the monster, but they could hear it fighting a duel with two heavy machine-guns on the road below. Then the sound of its engine receded. The noise brought out the last sleepers. The steep bank was safe from the British shells, most of which flung harmless geysers from the flats below. Aeroplanes flying very low now attacked, and then a tank came over the hill in front, firing its 6-pounder and machine-guns. The machine-guns could not stop it and panic began, but the officers were able to hold their men. The tank came on, to the edge of the cliff, the garrison with their guns having to press out of its way. Then its driver suddenly saw his danger and put his engine into reverse, and the monster slowly withdrew into the smoke.

At this stage a message came from the front. It was from Spengler, asking for help. Two light machine-gun sections were sent to him, and three scouts were also sent by Maj. Rathenow³¹ into Cérisy to see if it had been lost; they returned to say that no Australians were yet there, but at the western edge of the village two tanks fired on them. A second tank now came over the spur. As it neared the bank its engine broke down. The crew could be heard trying to restart it. The German machine-gunners by intense fire tore open one of its embrasures; the Germans swarmed round and it was eventually set on fire by an explosion.³² Res.-Lt. Imig (3/97th I.R.) saved the crew from some of his angry men. Another tank now appeared and moved parallel to the bank, firing, and receiving intense fire. Suddenly its crew left it and tried to take position behind it, but were overpowered and captured; their tank had burst into flames. (This and the two that preceded it were probably those attached to the 14th Bn.)

Shortly afterwards the Germans lining the bank were fired on by tanks which had got past on the southern flank, enfilading the position. Maj. von Rathenow decided to withdraw, and ordered the machine-gun company to retire first and cover him.³³ "At 9.20," he says, "I ordered the withdrawal." The Australians came over the spur too late to prevent his crossing the flats below.

The tanks that had finally outflanked these Germans were those with the right of the 14th Battalion and the left of the 13th. These troops had now crossed the spur at a point farther to the right, though in view of the German field-gunners at Chipilly.³⁴ The 14th had also met machine-gun fire from the

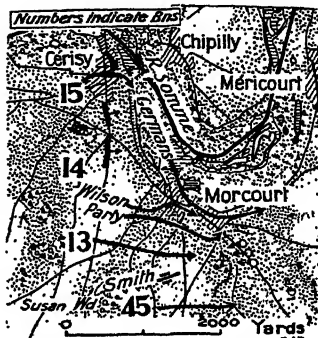
³¹ These three N.C.O's, Dietrich, Anton, and Müller played a daring part throughout.

³² Possibly caused by a bomb. German infantry was instructed to attack tanks by firing at the loop-holes and also by getting behind the tanks and throwing bundles of bombs on to their backs. Gen. Kabisch says that it was rather like catching birds by putting salt on their tails. The history of the 97th I.R. says that two tanks here were hit by trench-mortars and Australian narratives support this.

³³ How many heavy machine-guns, if any, were withdrawn is not known; as will presently be seen, 12 were left.

³⁴ Lt. F. W. Appleton (St. Kilda, Vic.), of Pozières fame, was killed; Capt. C. R. T. Cole (Melbourne) was wounded but continued in the attack.

spur beyond Morcourt;³⁵ but Lieut.-Col. Crowther ordered his right companies to press forward, and Capt. Smith³⁶ of the 39th Battery (supporting the 16th Battalion) galloped his guns across the exposed crest a mile south of Cérisy and running two of them to the top of the next spur fired 100 shells into the machine-gunners at 1,300 yards' range, enabling the right of the 14th, and the 16th Battalion behind it, to get ahead without further difficulty.³⁷ This was the movement that forced the Germans from the Cérisy bank; thirty of them made for the bridge between Cérisy and Chipilly, but Coy. Sergt.-Maj. Day³⁸ of the 15th already had this covered and a Lewis gunner³⁹ drove them off with the rest along the river road through Morcourt to Méricourt. The right of the 14th looking down on Morcourt saw them hurrying past the end of the gully, and, though the 14th had only one tank left, Capt. Wilson⁴⁰ decided to clear the village from the south without waiting for the rest of the allotted troops. As, headed by the tank under a British sergeant, the 14th reached the place a senior German officer sped past in a motor-car, but two officers trying to follow him on their horses were shot.⁴¹ From the position of the 15th Battalion also, in Cérisy, a tank had tried to work behind the Germans at the bank, but they turned a trench-mortar upon it and drove it back. Finally Capt. Domeney led a party to the place. Most of the Germans had gone but at the top of the bank were found twelve heavy machine-guns, with live



³⁵ The spur on which the second objective lay.

³⁶ Capt. A. O. Smith, 10th F.A. Bde. Jackaroo; of "Boatman" and "Wellshot" Stations, W. Q'land; b. Summer Hill, N.S.W., 28 Feb. 1891. Died 2 Sep. 1937.

³⁷ The two guns were then galloped back to shelter; one artilleryman was hit by a machine-gun bullet.

³⁸ C.S.M. R. A. Day, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 6001; 15th Bn.). Selector; of Withersfield, Q'land; b. Rosario, Argentine, 29 June 1888.

³⁹ Pte. (later Cpl.) J. P. Pringle, M.M. (No. 4878; 15th Bn.). Timberfeller; of Woombye, Q'land; b. Bundaberg, Q'land, 3 Oct. 1894.

⁴⁰ Capt. N. Wilson, M.C.; 14th Bn. Bank clerk; of E. Malvern, Vic.; b. Euroa, Vic., 5 Oct. 1893.

⁴¹ One was endeavouring to rescue the canteen funds.

cartridge belts and piles of empty cartridges, and six trench-mortars surrounded with empty shell-cases. In the dugouts behind the slope a party under Corpl. Knipe⁴² took 50 prisoners, and released a British officer and some men of the foremost tanks.

Meanwhile at Morcourt the British sergeant and his tank had made easy the work of Wilson's company of the 14th. In cellars were found telephones, typewriters, and maps, and, in all, some 300 prisoners were taken.

In this village the commanders of two brigades (26th, and 85th Reserve) and of an artillery group had left their headquarters shortly before the Victorians arrived.

Farther south, when the British "heavies" lifted their fire from the wooded Morcourt valley, the 13th found among canteens, stores, transport lines, and shelters, teeming with unresisting Germans, more souvenirs than it had time to collect. Among three tiers of huts were an officers' mess (with fresh grapes and eggs), two canteens with good pre-war cigars, a store of photographs and boxes of maps, and a pay office where one man blew open a case with 25,000 marks in notes. Waggon piled with stores, apparently just arrived, one vehicle containing six machine-guns, were near the track on which the 13th hurriedly re-formed, and 60 horses were picketed there.⁴³ As the battalion moved up the far slope, Capt. Geary,⁴⁴ formerly transport officer, mounted one of the horses and amid cheers galloped up to the head of the lines. At the top he handed his mount to a trench-mortar man and immediately afterwards fell shot through the head.

Here the comparative immunity of the 13th ended. From

⁴² Cpl. R. C. Knipe, M.M. (No. 611; 15th Bn.). Drover and kangaroo shooter; of Caulfield, Vic.; b. Newmarket, Vic., 6 Oct. 1892.

⁴³ Similar stores were found all along this valley and in some other gullies. In one headquarters at Susan Wood were champagne and other wines, liqueurs, cigars and a parcel of fresh grapes. In this case, supervision being difficult, the liquors were smashed by an officer of the 45th; in other instances the treasure trove was issued during the next few days to the battalions that captured it. The mail cart of one German regiment had just arrived loaded. The commander of the Chestnut Troop, R.H.A., tells how, when he and his companion, Lt. L. P. Huggins, were afterwards foraging for rations, a "Digger" volunteered: "If you will accompany me I can do something much better than that," and, cutting open a mail bag, produced a bottle of cherry brandy and some cake, which he shared with them. The waggons captured by the 13th Bn. were immediately used in sending back wounded and bringing up stores.

⁴⁴ Capt. J. G. Geary, 13th Bn. Miner: of Meekatharra, W.A.; b. Tamworth, N.S.W., 7 July 1871. Killed in action, 8 Aug. 1918.

"Morgan Wood" in the dip in front, as well as from other parts of that gully and the ridge east of it came a stiff fire of snipers and machine-guns. In addition, when the left of the battalion had reached a chalk-banked road that cut diagonally up the farther side of Morcourt valley, it was suddenly and fiercely shelled in flank and rear by field-guns north of the Somme. A moment of panic occurred, but Coy. Sergt.-Maj. Oswald⁴⁵ steadied the waverers and then gave his own men such a lead up the slope that groups on either side also made the rush to the crest. There by the sniping from ahead and the fire of field-guns from the flank and front the battalion had a splendid company commander, Capt. Patrick,⁴⁶ killed and sixty men hit within a few minutes.⁴⁷

In the valley which the 13th Bn. found so rich in "souvenirs" had been the camp of the resting battalion of the 55th I.R. It had hurriedly climbed to the white-banked road and opened fire, but had been silenced by Capt. Smith's two field-guns. The I/55th was not unsupported; a second resting battalion of the 13th Divn., the III/15th, which had been camped in Cateaux Woods behind Méricourt, was ordered by the divisional commander in person to hold the spur south of Morcourt. But they could see tanks with "infantry columns" advancing there and a battery driving up. "English" troops were everywhere advancing as far to the south as the eye could see, and not a German was in sight anywhere. Capt. Böhm took position east of Morcourt valley where his troop happened upon the I/55th already engaged in a stiff fire-fight. German accounts say that the two battalions were vehemently attacked by low-flying aeroplanes (of which they shot down one) and at about 10 o'clock, being outflanked on both sides by tanks and the attendant infantry, both flanks began to break away. "It was too late for an orderly retirement of the two battalions. . . . Incessantly chased by low-flying aeroplanes, followed by the fire of the enemy infantry, machine-guns, and tanks, the majority of the parties that managed in most parts to get away were scattered and considerable bodies were completely surrounded and captured." The German monograph, however, is here inaccurate; these troops withdrew before they were outflanked,⁴⁸ and most of the prisoners were captured, not fighting, but sheltering in Morcourt valley or, later, in the next gully.

During most of this phase and of the next the German

⁴⁵ C.S.M. W. Oswald, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 1389; 13th Bn.). Miner; of Cessnock and Uralla, N.S.W.; b. Minmi, N.S.W., 14 June 1889.

⁴⁶ Capt. K. N. Patrick, 13th Bn. Clerk; of Ashfield, N.S.W.; b. Randwick, N.S.W., 12 Jan. 1887. Killed in action, 8 Aug. 1918.

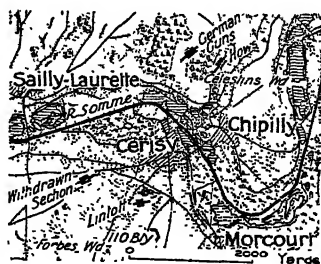
⁴⁷ Lt. N. J. McGuire (Benalla, Vic.) and two men went into Morgan Wood and captured two of the machine-guns with their crews. Lt. L. W. H. Cleland, (Chatswood, N.S.W.) picking up a Lewis gun whose crew had been hit, captured another German machine-gun. Pte. C. Finch (Newtown, N.S.W.) rushed and bombed a fourth, and Pte. R. A. Sloan (Bombala, N.S.W.) a fifth.

⁴⁸ They were the 1,000 men whom the 12th Bde. saw fleeing largely without arms towards Méricourt (*see p. 560*).

artillery north of the Somme was the chief instrument of the enemy's resistance on the Australian front.

**Start of duel
with the
enfilading
guns**

It was not without opponents. Only a few minutes behind the 4th Brigade's infantry came some of the twelve batteries of artillery allotted to help its attack. To each of its battalions had been attached at least two guns or howitzers of the 10th Brigade, A.F.A., and the remainder were moving close in rear. Before the mist vanished the main body of the 38th Battery was in position behind the spur south of Cérisy.⁴⁹ Its commander, Maj. de Low,⁵⁰ with Lieut. Jolly⁵¹ went up the hill to the infantry to find out what guns had blown out the tanks of the 15th Battalion. There de Low spotted the enemy guns at Chipilly. As these were down by the river, his battery would be prevented by the Cérisy spur from getting at them. He therefore sent back two guns to near the Hamel road 1,000 yards west of Cérisy, from which site their shells would clear the crest. Meanwhile the two German guns in Célestins Wood had been punishing every target that attracted them. In the orders of the Australian and III Corps it had been laid down that, to avoid confusion, batteries must fire only on their own sides of the river. But in the existing conditions this policy was so obviously wrong that Lieut. Lintott,⁵² in charge of the two guns of the 38th still on Cérisy ridge, now turned them on the enemy. He had fired two shells from each when the opposing guns put a shell into one of them, killing and wounding the crew and mortally wounding Lintott.⁵³ The German gunners, who could be seen serving their pieces, were then taken on by



⁴⁹ Two guns under Capt. C. Webber (Melbourne) had been detached to follow the 14th Bn.

⁵⁰ Brig. H. C. de Low, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 38th Bty., 1916-18. Surveyor and civil engineer; of Parramatta, N.S.W.; b. Parramatta, 16 May 1892.

⁵¹ Lt. W. G. Jolly, M.C.; 38th Bty. Clerk; of Launceston, Tas.; b. Launceston, 14 Jan. 1894.

⁵² Lt. A. N. Lintott, 38th Bty. Book-keeper; of Collie, W.A.; b. Wimbledon, N.S.W., 1894. Died of wounds, 9 Aug. 1918.

⁵³ The No. 1, Sgt. E. T. Cornish (Sydney), was killed.

the two retired guns, but these also were at once blown out. A few minutes later the 110th Howitzer Battery, which had taken position high on the spur south of the 38th, was heavily and accurately shelled by 4.2-inch howitzers firing from the lower part of the same wood. Two or three times a minute the German shells bracketed the Australian guns. Lieut. Chapman⁵⁴ was mortally wounded; several gunners were killed and a dozen wounded, and the pieces had to be temporarily abandoned.

Evidently (noted an Australian eyewitness) the Germans were still on the heights by Malard Wood or Bois des Célestins or else Chipilly—those places were simply straight down the end of the gully, blocking the lower entrance of it as the back scene blocks a stage. Somewhere in that back scene there must be a couple of guns—4.2's I should say—looking right in at the back of those batteries. The shooting was absolutely deadly and very quick. Then they turned on to a couple of tanks . . . on the same slope—the tank people hurriedly got them going and moved in under the banks further round. Then they turned on the next battery, which was firing. The gunners still worked for a few rounds, but then they all came, at some order I suppose, doubling round . . . under the bank.

The two guns at the upper end of Célestins Wood were the right section of the 8th Battery, 13th F.A.R., supporting the 27th (Württemberg) Division. The history of their regiment says:

About 8.45 the mist fell at one stroke to the steaming meadows of the Somme Flats and the first glance over the foreground showed the extent of the enemy's success. The southern slope of the Somme valley gradually rising to the commanding Roman road was teeming with enemy columns which, hurrying forward under the protection of the slowly vanishing ground mist, had already passed the alignment of the German trenches on this (the northern) side. The German lines appeared to have been wiped away. On the far side of Cérisy . . . half way up the slope crept four tanks in echelon. Next to them a light English battery had unlimbered under cover of the mist. With the glass each man could be clearly seen at the guns. All this in impetuous, hurried forward movement. . . . It was a bit of luck that immediately over the low ground a light mist still lay, which wrapped its cloak over the foreground so far as all things in the valley were concerned. Thus the (German) guns emplaced high at the northern end of the valley were able earlier to recognise the shadowy columns hastening with all speed towards the east along the road beside the Somme immediately at their feet, and get themselves ready to shoot more quickly than their opponent.

From about 2,000 metres' range⁵⁵ burst the first long shell from the section of the left flank battery (the 8th) . . . into the march column

⁵⁴ Lt. F. E. Chapman, 110th How. Bty. Clerk; of North Sydney; b. North Sydney, 3 Sep. 1891. Died of wounds, 11 Aug. 1918.

⁵⁵ The history of the 13th F.A.R. says "200 metres," an obvious misprint.

of British infantry which, after vain attempts to emplace its machine-guns behind the road hedges or in the gardens of Cérisy, sank out of sight in the meadows and hedges at the northern entrance of the village.

The immediate danger from the left was first removed. Now targets offered in confusing plenty. First came, in their turn, the tanks which in their clumsiness had not managed to get much farther forward. After five or six shots all four flamed up, providing a dreadful end for their crews. Then the English batteries, brought into action on the same alignment as our batteries but with front to the east, were taken over open sights. Crack Crack! a pair of Blue Cross shells⁵⁶ flew across, and already the crew left their pieces and vanished in a gully behind the battery from which later the limbers dashed out in an attempt to save the guns. A few well placed shells prevented the attempt. . . .⁵⁷

The effect of the fire of the batteries was before long apparent. One could see motor ambulances rushing up and back at top speed.⁵⁸ Farther back on the valley road tanks that had been rolling forward now clumsily retired, artillery brigades trotting across country made détours; before long the advance on the far side of the Somme, so far as it lay within the range of the group (*i.e.*, the group of German batteries north of the Somme) came to a stop and movement ceased.

Other German accounts say that the artillerymen on the northern heights felt keenly their inability to fire at all the targets offering. How tempting these must have been the Australian diarist already quoted shows:

The German shells (he says) next began to fall on the slope on which we were sitting, so we . . . went on up the gully. This top of the gully was just as clearly in view as the bottom, and into it came team after team of beautifully groomed Royal Horse Artillery horses. They wheeled round and took shelter under the edge of the wood ("Reginald Wood") with their flank quite open to the Germans looking up the valley. Across the head of the valley was by now a complete line of (British and Australian) guns, some of them with their camouflage nets already spread well out over them. They were in a straight line and down the end of the gully to their left, was the same landscape which looked into the Australian guns at the bottom of the valley.

At the top of the valley two of the 3rd Division's tanks

⁵⁶ That is, shells containing "sneezing gas."

⁵⁷ Here the German account is in error. It is true that the drivers of both the 38th and 110th Bties. dashed out with their teams several times, and that the Germans burst shells among them, killing and wounding several horses and drivers. In spite of these losses five of the guns of 110th were pulled back to the shelter of the valley. Its sixth gun had been temporarily disabled. Two guns of the 38th had to be abandoned for a time. The wounded at these batteries were rescued by their mates. L.-Cpl. J. A. Gill (St. Kilda, Vic.) of the 4th Field Ambulance also took his squad to their assistance.

⁵⁸ A Ford van of the 4th Field Ambulance was driven at 10 a.m. by Sgt. C. J. Graham (Gawler, S.A.) along the exposed Hamel-Cérisy road where several horse ambulances had had their horses shot. Thence Graham drove to Morcourt; and thence back through Warfusée. He then took out and posted three more motor ambulances.

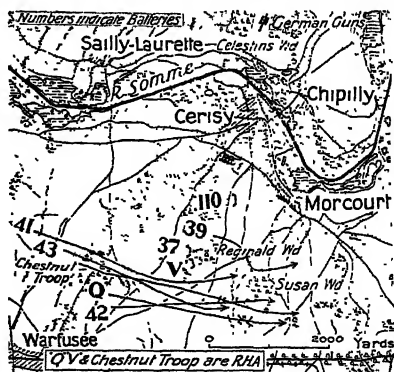
which had helped the 4th Division to Morcourt valley were returning, one towing the other.

Then past us on the other side trooped a procession of Royal Horse Artillery behind the wood. They were led by a young officer, riding round-backed, in the most immaculate dress. He carried a riding switch like a field-marshal's baton in his right hand. His helmet was covered with some terra cotta stuff which looked like chamois leather; and he wore chamois leather gloves unbuttoned at the wrist, going into action as he would go off to Rotten Row.

Behind rode his trumpeter and, farther behind, the battery, every man's helmet the same terra cotta colour and tilted at the same angle, the horses walking easily, tossing their chestnut manes. It was "A" Battery of the Royal Horse Artillery, the famous Chestnut Troop, going forward to play its part in the third phase of the advance.

The cessation of movement noted by the German gunners was mainly due to their fire which, as an Australian artillery report says, turned part of the riverside road temporarily into a second Hellfire Corner.⁵⁹ But it was also due to the completion of the second stage of the attack.

The position now reached, the "Red Line," was considered sufficiently advanced to rid Amiens of effective interference from the enemy. This much of the great task had been achieved, and, if necessary, the advance could have been ended there. The position gave a good field of fire, and was at once to be strongly entrenched and wired; the six "defensive" brigades of field artillery and all the "heavies" that could be quickly moved were already coming up to cover it. But the old outer line of the Amiens defences, an



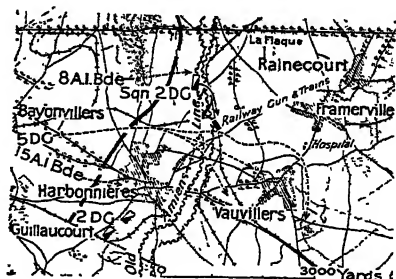
Battery movements near Reginald Wood.

⁵⁹ A famous danger spot on the Ypres-Menin road.

elaborate system 500 yards deep but now overgrown with grass, lay ahead; on the Australian front it was only 1,000 yards distant at the Roman road, and 2,500 yards on the flanks where valleys intervened. In the third phase this system was if possible to be seized without delay, and on the Australian front this would be done by light forces, comprising the man-carrying tanks and their passengers, supported by one or two battalions of each brigade that had taken the Red Line. It was realised, however, that the enemy's reserves, maintained in villages and camps in the region immediately beyond, fringing the old Somme battlefield, might render the task impossible.

The troops of the two centre Australian brigades, 8th and 12th, reaching the Red Line astride of the watershed and the

Roman road, could see no sign of serious opposition ahead. South of the road part of the 1st Cavalry Brigade and, though only occasionally sighted by the Australians, the armoured cars were racing about the German camping and headquarters areas. The advanced guard of the 1st Cavalry Brigade, the Bays⁶⁰ (Lieut.-Col. Ing⁶¹), went in three bodies, the right squadron galloping into the gully south of Harbonnières, the left crossing the old Amiens line slightly south of the Roman road. The third squadron and headquarters, followed by some whippet tanks,⁶² supported the right squadron. Immediately afterwards a second regiment, the 5th Dragoon Guards (Lieut.-Col. Terrot⁶³) was ordered to "exploit" towards Framerville, the centre one of three almost intact villages, Rainecourt, Framerville, and Hospital.



⁶⁰ The 2nd Dragoon Guards.

⁶¹ Col. G. H. A. Ing, C.M.G., D.S.O.; 2nd Dragoon Guards. Commanded North Somerset Yeomanry, 1917-18, 1922-26, 2nd Dragoon Guards, 1918-19. Officer of British Regular Army; of Edenbridge, Kent, Eng.; b. Crockham Hill, Eng., 24 Apr. 1880.

⁶² These could travel 10 or 12 miles an hour but were armed only with machine-guns.

⁶³ Brig. C. R. Terrot, D.S.O.; 6th (Inniskilling) Dragoons. Commanded 5th Dragoon Guards, 1918; 6th Dragoon Guards, 1918-21; 5th-6th D.G., 1922; Iraq Levies, 1926-7; 2nd Indian Cav. Bde. 1928-32. Officer of Brit. Regular Army; b. 26 Aug. 1878.

ville, and Vauvillers. that extended with small intervals across the plateau south of the Roman road a mile or two beyond the final objective on the 5th Division's front. Advancing, each with its line of scouts in front, the squadrons, in formations whose density astonished the infantry, passed north of Harbonnières, and then raced over the open towards the southern and nearest village, Vauvillers. The northern squadron (Capt. Mitchell)⁶⁴ made for three railway trains that stood on the open plateau just beyond the Amiens line, where the Germans had a system of transverse railway lines supplying their huge dumps at the Roman road and elsewhere. As the squadron crossed the Amiens line, which was empty, shots came from the carriages. The Australian infantry, through whom the dragoons had passed, also were watching those trains. Two, on a light railway, steamed hurriedly south-east towards Vauvillers. The third was a broad-gauge train with a huge hump-backed truck in the middle, from which several times expanded a cloud of tawny smoke. The hump was seen to be a large railway gun, which was actually shooting. At last this train too moved, the driver evidently trying to shunt it on to another line. But his engine was now attacked by a British aeroplane. Bombs burst around it, the engine stopped and gave off a cloud of steam and some trucks at the back began to burn. Germans climbed out and tried to run for Vauvillers, but the nearest parties of cavalry⁶⁵ raced up. The driver was found to be badly burnt. The train and eventually all the men who were trying to escape from it were captured.

The German official monograph states that the commander of the gun, in spite of advice from passing officers, insisted on firing three or four shots "into space" before he moved.⁶⁶

Sending the prisoners back to the Australians Mitchell's squadron galloped on round the north and east of Vauvillers. Three batteries of field-guns retiring along a road were here captured and sent towards the British lines. At first the Germans were surprised and panic-stricken; but at this stage a party rallied and fired from a wood south of the village. Mitchell,

⁶⁴ Maj. L. F. Mitchell, M.C.; 5th Dragoon Guards. Officer of Brit. Regular Army; b. 11 Jan. 1893.

⁶⁵ Lt. A. J. Cockrill's patrol of the 2nd Dragoon Guards, and Capt. Mitchell's squadron of the 5th.

⁶⁶ According to the German narrative, two aeroplanes attacked the train.

who now had with him but twenty men,⁶⁷ could answer only with useless revolver fire, and on all sides other German fugitives, taking heart, began to shoot. Mitchell hurriedly did his best to disable five of the field-guns and then, forcing as many German artillerymen as he could control to accompany him, withdrew to the German ambulance camp north of the village. Here he found the centre squadron (Capt. Winterbottom's⁶⁸) skirmishing on foot against some enemy in Vauvillers. A patrol sent north to Framerville was fired on by a British armoured car in that village, one cavalryman being hit. The two squadrons were then ordered to help the third, which had run into a force of the enemy with machine-guns between Vauvillers and Harbonnières and suffered severely. But by then it was known that the 8th Australian Brigade had occupied the old Amiens trenches, and Col. Terrot⁶⁹ therefore withdrew his regiment through it. The left squadron of the advanced guard (under Capt. Sir Christopher Magnay⁷⁰) had met machine-gun fire south of the Roman road. It too remained ahead of the Amiens line until the Australians had settled down.

Some of the British armoured cars also had been raiding the Germans in this area. Six under Maj. Boucher⁷¹ were to drive along the Roman road and then turn south. Passing the Amiens line, one pair under Lieut. Rollings⁷² went south-east by the nearest road to Framerville, where the 51st German Corps⁷³ was believed to have its headquarters. Another couple under Lieut. Herd⁷⁴ made for the same place by the more easterly road which crossed the Roman road at La Flaque. Here they met a procession of transport waggons moving quietly from Framerville northwards. The machine-

The armoured cars at Framerville

⁶⁷ The rest had been hit or detached on prisoners' escort, etc.

⁶⁸ Capt. A. D. Winterbottom, D.S.O.; 5th Dragoon Guards. Officer of British Regular Army; b. 11 May 1885.

⁶⁹ He was wounded; the regiment lost 2 officers and 56 others, and 122 horses.

⁷⁰ Maj. Sir C. B. W. Magnay, Bt., M.C.; 2nd Dragoon Guards (Queen's Bays). Land agent; of Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, Eng.; b. London, 27 Mar. 1884.

⁷¹ Maj. W. E. Boucher, M.C.; 17th (Armoured Car) Bn., Tank Corps (formerly Worcestershire Regt.). Of Kidderminster, Eng. Died about 1932.

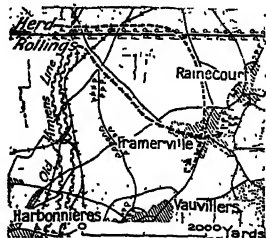
⁷² Lt. E. J. Rollings, M.C.; 17th (Armoured Car) Bn., Tank Corps. Policeman; of Knighton, Radnorshire, Wales; b. Hereford, Eng., 15 Sept. 1893.

⁷³ The German practice was to indicate by Arabic numerals the headquarters of corps temporarily formed.

⁷⁴ Lt. D. W. Herd, M.C.; 17th (Armoured Car) Bn., Tank Corps.

guns in the cars⁷⁵ opened fire on horses and drivers causing the wildest confusion. Horses were killed and wounded. Drivers fled. German soldiers came out of the houses of Framerville to see the cause of the uproar and were fired on. At the southern end of the village at a sharp turn of the road three artillery limbers were met. The drivers were shot; the horses stampeded and stopped the way.

An approaching lorry, its driver shot, swerved to the ditch and added to the block. Meanwhile Lieut. Rollings, searching for a corps headquarters, had passed through the village from west to east, fired at here and there from the houses. At the eastern exit he discovered a house of some importance. He went up the steps revolver in hand and found the rooms used as offices, evidently abandoned a few minutes before. Staff papers were everywhere, some of them hurriedly torn. He stuffed all that he could into sandbags and then came out to find his gunners facing four German staff officers who were forthwith shot and their papers also taken.⁷⁶ Pigeons sent from Framerville by Herd and Rollings at 10.30 and 11.5 respectively reported their actions.⁷⁷ Rollings added that the only opposition in Framerville came from "a few snipers in the houses."



Enemy infantry surrendering very freely (he again reported). Have sent scores back and killed scores, others running away. Enemy artillery nil. Have toured round Framerville and upset all their transport etc. Australian flag⁷⁸ hoisted at 11.15 on German Corps H.Q.

What German headquarters these were is uncertain.⁷⁹

Those of the 51st Corps were at Misery. The map with the official monograph shows no divisional or corps headquarters in any village

⁷⁵ The cars had the chassis of touring cars, the bodies being enclosed in armour and surmounted by two turrets each containing a machine-gun.

⁷⁶ Some of the papers secured by Rollings when examined at army headquarters were found to be important, including plans of the Hindenburg Line defences. These probably furnished useful knowledge, but the statement made in 1931, that they were the means of bringing the war to an abrupt end, was part of an absurd "stunt" of a sensational newspaper.

⁷⁷ The reports seem to have reached Australian Corps H.Q. at 2.8 and 1.23 p.m. respectively.

⁷⁸ A small flag given him by Gen. Monash. He nailed it above the door.

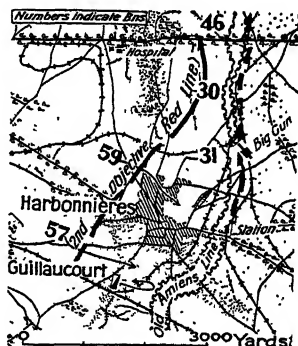
⁷⁹ German histories mention only the transport in Framerville. Conceivably it was an advanced corps headquarters. (See Vol. XII, plate 517. The caption of plate 516 in editions 1-14 is erroneous.)

raided by the cars, nor does any available German account mention their being thus caught. Ludendorff says, "Divisional staffs were surprised in their headquarters by enemy tanks," but the headquarters referred to is probably that near Harbonnières, mentioned later in this chapter.

The 41st German Divn. reported that the armoured cars had great moral effect on the troops, who felt helpless against them. When officers rallied stragglers the cars scattered them again.

With such disturbances occurring to the enemy ahead, of whom a handful of fugitives could be seen making for the great dumps at La Flaque along the Roman road, the leading battalions of the 8th Brigade on reaching the Red Line did not wait for their passenger-carrying tanks, which had not yet come into view. The men of the 31st and 30th were strolling about, waiting for orders, and Lieut.-Cols. Freeman and Street⁸⁰ accordingly decided to move on at once, sending back to Brig.-Genl. Tivey for covering authority. Patrols found the Amiens line empty except for stragglers, and by 11 o'clock the two battalions had marched up to it. The 15th Brigade was not yet through Harbonnières but the 31st extended its right to about Harbonnières station on the old civil railway which, amid several military ones, crossed the front a quarter of a mile east of that village.

The leading battalions of the 15th Brigade also went on without their Mark V Star tanks, which were not yet in sight. The rear companies of the 57th leap-frogging their front companies at the Red Line, found cavalry (the Bays) in the valley south-west of Harbonnières capturing German transport which came unsuspecting under the railway bridge there. The first British to enter the valley had been Lieut. Arnold and his two men⁸¹ in their whippet tank, which here raced ahead of the army, helped the cavalry patrols to reach the railway bridge, and then cruised beyond the Amiens line north of the railway,



⁸⁰ Lt.-Col. F. Street, D.S.O.; 30th Bn. Solicitor; of Newcastle, N.S.W., b. Newcastle, 27 Dec. 1884.

⁸¹ Gnr. C. Ribbens and Sgt. W. J. Carnie (Kintore, Scotland).

shooting at retiring transport and also at troops many of whom, however, escaped by merely sinking amid the corn. After skirmishing for an hour south-east of Harbonnières, the whippet ran into a large number of troops and was shot into flames, the driver, Sergt. Carnie, being killed and the others captured.

The troops into whom Arnold ran were transport of two regiments (18th Res. and 373rd) of the 225th Divn., together with its instructional school. Early on Aug. 8 this division, being driven out of its line by the Canadians south of the Luce, had ordered up this force, about 500 in all, to protect its headquarters in some sunken huts in the open country south-east of Harbonnières. The force had just arrived there about 9 o'clock, says the history of the 217th R.I.R., "when the first tank appeared; it came up across country. A patrol of the instructional school under Res. Capt. Renner (O.C. school) with a light machine-gun took it under fire and advanced within a few yards of it. A few shots with armour-piercing ammunition and the tank stopped and began to burn. Three men left it. A pigeon set free at the last moment was shot down but had no message on it. Prisoners and pigeon . . . were sent to D.H.Q."

Meanwhile in the valley south-west of Harbonnières the cavalry had galloped down some Germans who tried to resist among the huts there. Climbing the far side to reach the Amiens line, however, the cavalry were driven back by machine-guns firmly established. A second attempt made with the help of two more whippets was also defeated.⁸²

The troops here facing the cavalry were part of the resting half-battalion of the 148th I.R. under Maj. Picht. They had been sent by their division, as its last reserve, towards Bayonvillers, but being shelled, attacked by airmen, and outflanked by whippets and cavalry, they fell back, partly along the railway, and eventually held the Amiens line astride of it.

The 57th Battalion as it marched up assumed that the whippets seen wheeling ahead were merely chasing stragglers. Capt. Snowball's⁸³ company found the cavalry holding a sunken road on the slope up to the Amiens line, with their right flank along the Amiens-Chaulnes railway embankment, from which they were firing southward at Germans retiring on the Canadian front. Close behind the cavalry were two field-guns of the 53rd Australian Battery under Lieut. Punch, shooting at German machine-guns.⁸⁴

⁸² One tank was put out of action; the other broke down; and three officers of the squadron, including its commander (Capt. R. T. Barnard), were hit.

⁸³ Capt. J. I. Snowball, 57th Bn. Bank clerk; of Camberwell, Vic.; b. Princes Hill, Melbourne, 4 Nov. 1890. Died of wounds, 14 Aug. 1918.

⁸⁴ Later the guns were shelled and one was hit, but the drivers got them away.

It was then 10.40. The cavalry was about to mount and renew its attempt when an aeroplane watching above for counter-attack fired a white flare: a body of Germans was assembling on the plateau beyond the Amiens line, and what appeared to be a battalion was marching up behind them. A counter-attack seemed to be impending, and, as the 57th had now taken up the curved flank position which it was to occupy until the Canadians came up, the cavalry commander decided to reinforce it till the danger passed.

Meanwhile tanks entered Harbonnières⁸⁵ at several points, followed by the former support companies of the 59th which (under Capt. Southwell and Lieut. Binder) had leap-frogged the previous leaders at the Red Line.⁸⁶ The village at first seemed empty, but waggons packed with rifles, kit, and stores, "cookers" with food ready, and two saddled horses in a stable showed how hurriedly it had been left.⁸⁷ A few shots were fired at the invaders and a few prisoners and machine-guns taken. Capt. Dunkley's company now again passed through Capt. Southwell's,⁸⁸ making for the Amiens line a quarter of a mile east of the village.

But here fire came from two machine-guns north and south of Harbonnières station, past which the Amiens line ran. The company was stopped, but, seeing a returning tank, Dunkley ran to it and asked for help. The tank commander at once turned back and made for the station; some Germans fled but the company following captured an officer, 23 men, and two machine-guns. The station, however, remained in German hands, as will be seen later.

South of this Southwell's and Binder's companies emerging from the village were fired on severely, on the left, from a

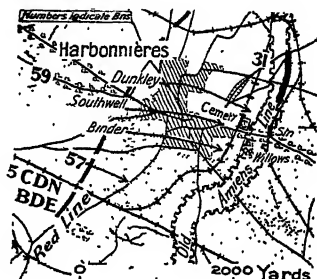
⁸⁵ Lt.-Col. E. D. Bryce (of Johore) of the 2nd Tank Bn. went in with the leading tank and fixed on a prominent house a flag given him by General Monash and a flag of his own battalion. The 59th placed on the church a flag sent by General Birdwood. (Col. Bryce died in May 1936.)

⁸⁶ Lt. Binder's company sent two Lewis gun sections round the southern edge of the village to catch escaping Germans. Germans in a house at the south-eastern corner, finding Australians on both sides of them, surrendered.

⁸⁷ Two of the three reserve battalions of the 117th Div. had marched from it only a few hours before, to meet the Canadians. The waggons were found at a headquarters, where 35 men were captured by Lt. S. T. Herriot's platoon.

⁸⁸ This was the third leap-frog by part of the battalion in this phase. In the 57th Bn. two platoon commanders, Lts. A. M. Williams (Sunbury, Vic.) and F. J. Kenealy (Essendon, Vic.), advanced by leap-frogging one platoon over the other throughout this stage in order to rest their men, who were becoming very tired.

plantation of young willows near the station, and on the right from other parts of the old Amiens line. Binder's company fell back 200 yards to the military railway immediately around the eastern outskirts, and Capt. Southwell's was stopped at the cemetery. At this moment a man was seen walking towards the copse firing his rifle. As he neared it twenty Germans, leaving their machine-guns, ran out to him with their hands up.⁸⁹ Lieut. Binder called the company to advance, but as soon as it got up half a dozen men were hit by fire from the flanks, and the attempt was temporarily abandoned. At this stage, however, Brig.-Genl. Elliott, who had been visiting the front, pointed out to Lieut.-Col. Scanlan that the 59th was not on



its objective and ordered it to advance. A Mark V tank found in Harbonnières, its weary crew asleep, was asked to help. It came round from south of the village. Lieut. Wadson's company was also to attack from that flank, and having earlier seen the tanks and cavalry ahead, set out on an apparently easy task. But it was met with fire that almost annihilated one platoon. The tank reached the Amiens line, but there developed engine trouble and had to come back, Germans swarming round it and vainly attacking it as it turned. This attempt of the 59th to reach the Amiens line failed as did another made after dusk.

Meanwhile on the right, as the expected counter-attack did not occur, Lieut.-Col. Denehy had asked the neighbouring Canadian battalion commander to co-operate with the 57th in a joint advance to the Amiens line. The 6th Canadian Brigade⁹⁰ was then far behind the Australian right, the 9th Cavalry Brigade having been held up at Guillaucourt till 11.15, and not yet having reached the Amiens line. The Canadian commander could only promise to advance his left, and as stubborn resist-

⁸⁹ He was found to be L.-Cpl. E. B. Gibson of the 59th Bn. (L.-Cpl. E. B. Gibson, D.C.M.; farmer; of Chinkapook, Vic.; b. Glengower, near Clunes, Vic., 31 Oct. 1886. Died of wounds, 18 Aug. 1918.)

⁹⁰ The 6th Cdn. Bde. had leap-frogged the 5th at the Red Line, with its 29th Bn. on its left.

ance was likely to be met the project was abandoned.⁹¹ The passenger-carrying tanks that came up about noon south of Harbonnières⁹² put their passengers, at Col. Denehy's request, mainly along his right flank; those north of Harbonnières took their teams out to the Amiens line already occupied by the left of the 59th Battalion and by the 8th Brigade.⁹³

Thus between 11 and 11.30 the 5th Division had reached its final objective for the day except on the extreme right where stiff resistance had been met and the flank had been kept back waiting for the cavalry and Canadians.

Ahead of the centre of the Australian Corps also the armoured cars had caused the enemy much confusion. One company of six cars⁹⁴ had gone straight along the Roman road. After firing into Germans at the huge roadside dumps at La Flaque, and five minutes later shooting at reserves and waggon lines in the second long gully into which the road dipped near Herleville, they ran at 10.35 into retiring transport at Foucaucourt on the edge of the old Somme battlefield.

The cars
ahead of
centre and
left

The history of the 217th R.I.R. says that the cars with their red, white, and blue flags were mistaken for German gun-carriers or ambulances, "but, when machine-gun fire suddenly rattled in Rainecourt gully, the error was recognised." They caused great confusion and loss among the vehicles which were hurrying to the east.⁹⁵

At one stage some of the cars were able to roll along behind several German lorries, no one taking any special heed of them. When they opened fire on the horse transport, teams bolted and waggons collided and blocked the main road.

⁹¹ An attempt projected at noon by the 1st Cav. Bde. also, to help the cavalry south of the Amiens-Chaulnes railway, was given up in consequence of the heavy machine-gun fire from beyond the Amiens line.

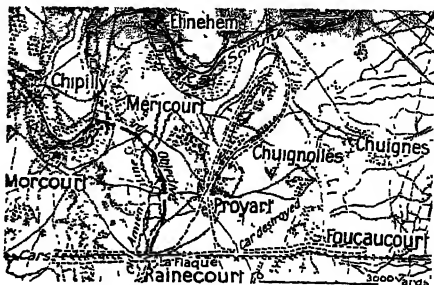
⁹² Under Maj. Ferres of the 58th Bn.

⁹³ Two machine-guns of the 14th M.G. Coy. were thus transported to near Harbonnières station and dislodged by fire a German post in the Amiens line. One of the 8th Bde.'s tanks, after unloading its passengers, was sent on to help the cavalry near Vauvillers. The passengers travelled in the tanks only the last part of the journey, and were exceedingly exhausted by the experience.

⁹⁴ Under Capt. R. H. Crichton. The cars were under Lts. A. C. and N. C. Wood and J. T. Yeoman.

⁹⁵ The flags were mistaken for the German red, white, and black. The transport of the 217th, leaving the gully later, avoided the Roman road but when passing through the ruins of Lihons was attacked by British airmen who had a free hand till the Richthofen "circus" arrived. The roads were blocked and the waggons got through with difficulty.

By 10.40 two cars taking a road to the north entered Proyart. Through the windows, wide open on this beautiful day, they machine-gunned soldiers sitting at breakfast. Four cars passing through this village completely emptied it of German troops. Two of them drove on towards the Somme. They raced a German motor lorry full of troops, killed or wounded most of its passengers, and, after descending towards the river, turned back south of Froissy promontory and withdrew through Chuignolles. Here they met a German staff car and killed or wounded all its occupants except the driver, who was



made to bring it back into the Australian lines. As the armoured cars returned towards the Roman road, retiring Germans constantly walked up to them unsuspecting. But two cars ran into a German machine-gun company⁹⁶ which had just left its camp south of Froissy Beacon and was settling into bits of trench on the hill north of Chuignolles. After exchanging a hot fire with it the cars came back. The four machines⁹⁷ specially charged with deep reconnaissance for General Monash had their way blocked by the tangle of transport near Foucaucourt. Here shells fired at close range from a gun beside the Roman road burst about them. Two cars had their wheels hit and one ran into the trees at the roadside; but all except one managed to return.⁹⁸

These sallies did not help the advance so directly as those south of the road where the cavalry's operations caused great confusion. Probably no one either in the 48th Battalion, which carried out the final phase on a front of over a mile and a half north of the Roman road, or in the few companies of Germans on that front, knew of these events at Proyart, which lay

⁹⁶ The I/22nd Machine Gun Sharpshooting Detachment. Its 2nd and 3rd Coys. had been captured in their positions supporting the 13th Div.

⁹⁷ Under Lts. A. C. Wood and Yeoman.

⁹⁸ The machine-guns of this car were saved.



25. PRISONERS PASSING THE CHURCH IN HARBONNIÈRES

They are being used in carrying or assisting wounded men.

*Aust War Memorial Official Photo. No. E2853.
Taken on 9th August, 1918.*

To face p. 584.



26. IN THE FINAL OBJECTIVE, 8TH AUGUST, 1918

A small post of the 30th Battalion in the old Amiens Line north-west of Harbomnières. The country ahead is that in which the cavalry and armoured cars had been operating. On the left are the trees of the Roman road.

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo No. E2789.

To face p 585.

in a hollow in the fields 1,000 yards beyond the final objective. Nevertheless these activities may have prevented transport or other troops in Proyart from reinforcing the line and they spread much panic among the German transport, which, by crowding the roads, hampered the subsequent bringing up of reserves.

The final objective of the infantry north of the road included the old Amiens line as far as the southern edge of Méricourt; but General MacLagan and his brigadiers (Generals Leane and Brand) chose to attack it with much lighter forces than were used by General Hobbs of the 5th Division. Two battalions (totalling some 1,000 rifles) were to cover more than 4,500 yards of front;⁹⁹ and, except on the extreme right, the ground was broken by a valley. But the battalions allotted were of outstanding quality, the 48th and its parent the 16th (W.A.).¹⁰⁰ The help of the passenger-carrying tanks was obviously desirable, but here the crossing of the first long valley had put a strain on these clumsy, underpowered machines, the interior of which became so hot that their passengers after riding in them for 1,000 yards had preferred to walk outside—a method adopted by all the Australian passengers this day except when close to the enemy. Nevertheless six of the tanks had caught up to the 48th Battalion by the time it neared Morcourt valley. Here both the 48th and its tanks had come under sharp fire of machine-guns and of the two field-guns then still close beyond the valley. The 48th's officers had extended their men and taken them to the valley at a steady run, but three of the tanks had been hit. The other three crawled south where the Roman road afforded a better crossing. The 46th and 45th were by then (at 10.25) already on the Red Line beyond the valley, and after giving his men a quarter of an hour's rest Lieut.-Col. Perry of the 48th, himself wounded in the arm in reaching the gully, took them on to their starting line. During an earlier pause he and his men had taken a distant look at their objective, a long field of growing crops sloping on the left front into a deep valley which would have to be crossed. Now, as the

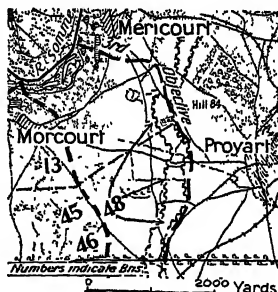
⁹⁹ The reason was that the 12th Bde. contained only three battalions, two of which were allotted to the second stage, while the 4th Bde. had used three of its four battalions in taking the second objective and holding the left flank.

¹⁰⁰ In 1917-18 the 48th was reinforced mainly by South Australians.

48th waited for the three tanks, Germans could be seen at the old Amiens line a mile away on the left. Several opposing machine-guns opened. A field-gun fired at three Mark V tanks that had covered the second phase and were waiting near "Hope Wood" for the third to start. All three were hit.

At 10.55, his passenger-carrying tanks being ready, Perry ordered the advance. Two of these monsters accompanied the right where the Amiens line lay only half a mile ahead; it was taken without opposition.¹ The third tank, "Orpheus" (Lieut. Burn),² went with the left where the objective was over a mile distant. The centre and left companies of the 48th under fire moved quickly over the rise to the intervening valley, which was half a mile wide. "Orpheus," now carrying his passengers, drove 100 yards beyond the Amiens line and then suddenly came into intense fire from rifles,

machine-guns, and field-guns. Turning back to drop his passengers, he was hit and burst into flames. Climbing out, three Lewis gunners of the 48th were shot at short range, but Lieut. King³ of the 12th Machine Gun Company with Corpls. Pritchard⁴ and Prentice⁵ managed to set up one of their two guns. King was killed, but the Germans who tried to swarm over the position were swept



away. The survivors from the tank reached the Amiens line about the time the leading company of the 48th arrived there. This had met heavy machine-gun fire and had to advance by rushes; where the wheat had been mown the troops worked from haycock to haycock. A German gun, apparently north of the Somme, burst its shells about them and the machine-

¹ In the right company of the 48th only two men were hit. Lt. B. F. Burrell's tank, "Optimist," made a second journey, carrying the passengers of a damaged tank.

² Lt. M. Burn, M.C.; 15th Bn., Tank Corps.

³ Lt. C. N. King, 12th M.G. Coy. Surveyor; of New Farm, Brisbane, and Tonga, Pacific Islands; b. Charters Towers, Q'land, 17 Feb. 1891. Killed in action, 8 Aug. 1918.

⁴ L.-Sgt. D. Pritchard, D.C.M. (No. 386; 12th M.G. Coy.). Opal miner; of Emerald, Q'land; b. Darvel, Ayrshire, Scotland, 5 Oct. 1888.

⁵ Cpl. G. N. Prentice, M.M. (No. 291; 12th M.G. Coy.). Driller; of Rocklea, Q'land; b. Ipswich, Q'land, 9 July 1886. Died of wounds, 19 Sep. 1918.

guns hit many, and progress was becoming very difficult when, to the surprise of the Australians, the Germans, who were in the nearer trenches of the Amiens line 200 yards ahead, stood up with their hands raised high. Restraining his men, who were angry at the loss of many comrades, Capt. Caldwell⁶ sent back the prisoners and pushed ahead to the final trench. This lay just beyond a crest, on crossing which the Australians saw, running about confusedly 200 yards away, a body of the enemy. German machine-guns there opened fire as the leading Australians slipped into the old trench. The two rear platoons had many casualties and were stopped, but their Lewis gunners pushed on and, locating the Germans before they themselves were seen, smothered them with fire while the platoons got in.⁷ The centre company under Lieut. Potts was opposed by machine-guns in a copse through which the old trenches ran. Tanks were sent for, but those of the 48th had by then withdrawn. However, Potts was able to send men along old trenches around the enemy's flank, and then, attacking with bombs and Lewis guns, he captured the copse taking 50 prisoners and 4 machine-guns.⁸ At the moment when the 48th reached its objective there arrived on limbers six machine-guns of the 12th Company (Capt. Taylor⁹), which opened at once upon the retreating enemy.¹⁰ The Royal Horse Artillery had been able to give little help. Its battery commanders, straining on the leash, had been held back too long for their liking.

We were convinced (says the private diary of the Chestnut Troop¹¹) that with Australian infantry we might have been allowed to go on, each battery on its own. . . . Very little firing was done as it was too risky [owing to the haze] but a Digger who had captured a Pip squeak was firing it for luck into the blue.

⁶ Capt. W. Caldwell, 48th Bn. School teacher; of Fremantle, W.A.; b. Fremantle, 26 Feb. 1892.

⁷ Twenty-two Germans surrendered there.

⁸ Sgts. R. J. Kealy (Kybylote, S.A.) and G. C. Seal (Midland Junction, W.A.) and Pte. R. E. Barrie (Hobart) were prominent in this action.

⁹ Capt. A. F. Taylor, M.C.; 12th M.G. Coy. Accountant; of Sydney; b. Yarrowonga, Vic., 20 Sep. 1892.

¹⁰ Lt. H. K. Coward (Mungindi, N.S.W.) of the 12th L.T.M. Bty. also arrived with four Stokes mortars. Although the 4th Pion. as arranged made mule tracks, on this day carriage by limber was almost everywhere found more useful. Taylor started his limbers when the infantry was half-way to the objective. The officers whose machine-guns opened so promptly were Lts. E. M. Cullimore (Mt. Morgan, Q'land) and E. P. Prendergast (Ascot Vale, Vic.).

¹¹ A copy of this, and permission to use it, has been most courteously given by the commander of the Troop through the request of Maj. (now Lt.-Col.) A. W. van Straubenzee, who commanded it in 1918-24.

The batteries were allowed to advance to the gully west of Morcourt valley, but eagerly though the commander of the Chestnut Troop scanned the wheatfield from a precarious perch in a tree,¹² he could find

no favourable targets as the Hun infantry were all surrendering. . . . I saw a Hun gun firing in the open and cantered back for a gun to take it on, but found an Australian battery was doing so; in fact they were ahead of us all day in that respect, having started by attaching one section to each attacking battalion. . . .

However, the 48th suffered only some 60 casualties in the battle.¹³ By 1.10 its signallers under Sergt. Davies¹⁴ had every company connected by telephone with Col. Perry's headquarters, making the task of artillery support easier.¹⁵

By far the hardest task of the day on the Australian front fell to the 16th Battalion, which had to take the final objective in the northernmost sector beside the Somme. Before the time for starting its attack messages were received from the 58th Division, III Corps, and Fourth Army stating that the British troops north of the Somme were on their second objective. This was doubted by the Australian *liaison* officer with the 58th Division, Maj. Morell, and was known to be untrue by the Australians south of the Somme who could see the German field-guns firing at them from the area supposed to have been taken. The 16th Battalion lost a few men through this shelling as it advanced to Morcourt valley, and the men of the 13th digging above the eastern edge of that valley were under this fire when the 16th assembled its companies along the chalk-banked road behind them.¹⁶ The Chipilly peninsula had been on the flank of the brigade's previous advance; now it would be in the 16th Battalion's rear.

The eight passenger-carrying tanks of the 16th were to be led by one of the finest fighting leaders that Australia pro-

¹² The batteries were north of "Valerie Wood," the tree 500 yards ahead at the Crucifix on the Morcourt-Harbonnières road.

¹³ Lt. J. G. O'Neill (Gordonvale, Q'land) was killed.

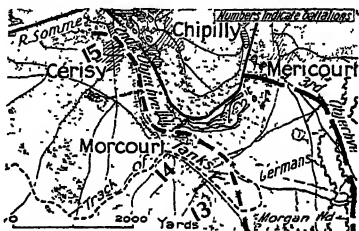
¹⁴ Sgt. T. O. Davies, D.C.M. (No. 2472; 48th Bn.). Postal assistant; of Boulder, W.A.; b. Swansea, Wales, 1889. Died 15 Mar. 1932. (Lt. C. W. Stoerkel, of Orroroo, S.A. the signalling officer, had been wounded.)

¹⁵ Shortage of signalling wire greatly hampered the artillery and to some extent the infantry; but more so did the fact that the tanks unavoidably wrecked telephone lines throughout a great part of the forward area.

¹⁶ Here Lt. W. R. Rogers (N. Perth, W.A.) was killed by a shell.

**The
hardest
task**

duced, Capt. W. J. D. Lynas—a man whose name was constantly coupled with those of Harry Murray, Percy Black, and Albert Jacka, who had helped so signally in giving this brigade its especial fighting fame. And by immense efforts Lynas with his parties and the tank personnel had managed by 10.25 to get four tanks—passengers walking outside—to the chalk-banked road on which the 16th was assembling.¹⁷ The intelligence officer, Lieut. Bradley, told them that the battalion was ready to move, and that the 13th were "getting a bad time" from machine-guns and snipers and had now no tanks to help them. To clear these snipers Lynas led his four tanks at once over the knuckle by "Morgan Wood" into the gully lying between the 16th and the Amiens line. Shells



from two German guns in the trees fringing the north bank of the Somme behind the nose of Chipilly Peninsula at once burst round them as they headed into the valley. The banging of the engines and clangour of metal inside the moving tanks was so great that Lynas could only see, not hear, the bursts. He and his officers sat by the drivers, looking through the slits and directing by touching the drivers on right or left. On reaching the hollow they were screened from fire by the riverside trees. In a sunken road here they found 70 Germans who surrendered without firing a shot. A number of others in holes and shelters, finding (as Lynas afterwards said) "that prisoners were not massacred," came out and gave themselves up. The tanks drove them before them down the valley,¹⁸ quickly

¹⁷ Like those allotted to other brigades, eight of these tanks carried as passengers 8 officers and 112 other ranks of the A.I.F. with 10 Vickers and 16 Lewis guns, an average of 15 passengers each beside the normal crew of eight. Two tanks broke down before reaching the first long valley. The remaining six with great difficulty zigzagged up and down the sides of the valleys till reaching the gully south-west of Morcourt, where it became evident that they could not climb the other side. Lt.-Col. Drake Brockman of the 16th therefore ordered them to go down to the riverside road and thence through Morcourt. This they did while the village was still not completely taken and had to wait at its southern exit for the British "heavies" to lift their fire from Morcourt valley. By this time two more had broken down.

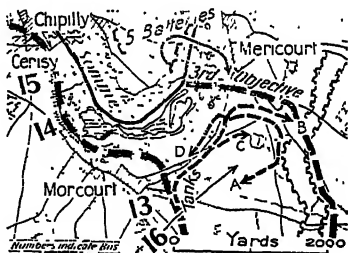
¹⁸ This was done by opening the doors in front of the tank and waving them on, firing a threatening burst from the Hotchkiss machine-guns if any strayed from the road, and so bringing them back.

delivering them to the outposts of the 13th on top of the Red Line spur.

These Germans were part of the two battalions (III/15th and I/55th) that had faced the 13th Aust. Bn. on the Red Line.

The tanks turned downhill again to the riverside road. To climb the hill on their right, clear of the cover of the riverside trees, with these huge underpowered machines constantly running hot and German field-guns 1,000 yards in their rear, seemed hopeless, so Lynas led them by this road towards Méricourt on the nearer outskirts of which the left of the final objective lay.

But after a third of a mile came open ground. Here, therefore, the three leaders took the risk of turning uphill, making for the Amiens line whose nearest trench was 500 yards away. Lieut. Minchin managed to get his tank to it and empty his passengers there before the machine was hit; but the tank of Lynas, who tried to follow him, was struck as it cleared the screen of trees. The shell failed to explode but pieces of metal knocked from the inside of the machine killed two and wounded ten of its inmates, and bent the exhaust so that hot fumes filled the interior. Lynas and his driver, however, drove on and reached the Amiens line.



"A" Lynas's tank; "B" Minchin's;
"C" Lydster's; "D" Garratt's.

Half-fainting, Lynas passed word at intervals for pairs of his men with their machine-guns to disembark. Presently the monster was hit again, its petrol tank being blown off. The driver therefore made for a bank on the rear slope, and there Lynas crawled round the interior to see to his men. Then for the first time he found that every one had collapsed, including those whom he had ordered to disembark. None had the strength to push open the doors. Lynas himself could only crawl out from the top of the machine. Men of the left-centre company of the 16th just then coming up helped out the inmates. Lynas could not stand; the driver had

fainted. All were carried or helped to sunken ground near by where they lay for over an hour before any could move himself.¹⁹

The tank in which was Lieut. Lydster²⁰ (4th Machine Gun Company) was hit half-way up the hill and some of the inmates were burnt. Lieut. Garratt's²¹ turned back along the riverside road to take an alternative course but, after going some distance behind the trees, it too was hit.

The history of one of the German regiments (15th I.R.) whose remnants tried to hold the Amiens line here says: "The artillery of the 43rd Reserve and 108th Divns. from the north bank, caused the enemy great losses, but was unable to hinder the encirclement by the tanks." The most effective fire came from three batteries of the 7th F.A.R., one south of Chipilly²² and two just across the river from Méricourt. As one tank (possibly Garratt's) could not be hit through the trees, Res.-Lt. Schroer brought a gun of the 7/243rd across the river to the southern edge of Méricourt and in three rounds shot it into flames.

Lynas's leading of his tanks north-westwards at the start of this phase caused headquarters of the 265th R.I.R. in Chipilly to think that he intended to cross the river. The regiment had several machine-guns covering the bridges and firing across the river, and Lt. Ahrens was now mortally wounded trying to stop the tanks with armour-piercing bullets.

Although the four tanks that attempted to lead the 16th Battalion were thus soon put out of action,²³ some determined men from among their exhausted inmates found strength enough to scramble with their guns into shell-holes higher on the ridge, from which their fire helped the advancing infantry.²⁴ But this was not the only assistance that the tanks had given to the 16th Battalion's attack. Actually the battalion had not been ready to

¹⁹ The Australians, having walked outside during the approach, generally recovered more quickly than the tank crews.

²⁰ Lt. T. R. Lydster, M.M.; 4th M.G. Coy. Bricklayer; of Northcote, Vic.; b. Paddington, N.S.W., 10 Mar. 1886.

²¹ Lt. C. C. Garratt, D.C.M.; 16th Bn. Meat salesman; of Walkerville, S.A.; b. Islington, London, Eng., 21 July 1892. Died of illness, 9 Nov. 1918.

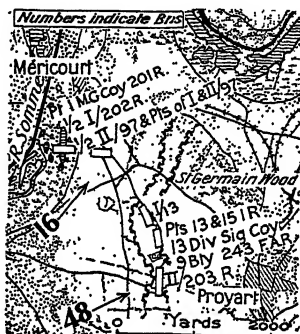
²² The history of the 265th R.I.R. says that Lt. Burchardi with a howitzer at Chipilly set fire to four tanks.

²³ The general view was that the Mark V Star tanks proved a complete failure. Lynas characteristically reported: "Bad luck and a few good brave 77. (German) artillerymen were the causes of the tanks not coming up to my expectation. Tank officers and crews, especially the drivers, did all in their power to assist the infantry. . . ."

²⁴ Thus Pte. J. Hagan (Perth, W.A.; died 8 Dec. 1920), 16th Bn., established his three mates in one post and, after the infantry came up, returned to help the wounded and fainting inmates of his tank, which he saw to be on fire and exploding. Ptes. C. L. Buckenara (Maylands, W.A.) and H. K. Lyon (South Fremantle, W.A.), 16th Bn., rescued the other inmates of their tank, all of whom had fainted, and then set up their Lewis gun. L.-Cpl. H. J. Corke (Yealering, W.A.), 16th Bn., set up another Lewis gun. Sgt. R. Sinclair (Dorriggo, N.S.W.), 4th M.G. Coy., after removing his officer and others from a tank, established his machine-guns.

and the nearest Australian post, eight or nine men, by simple bluff—firing at any head that appeared and telling its owner to "Kamerad"²⁸—captured over fifty. "They were simply booted off to the rear," said one of their captors afterwards; the Australians could afford no escort.

The Germans who had forced the 12th and 4th Bdes. to fight hard for the northern mile and a half of the final objective were partly the last resting battalion (I/13th I.R.) of the 13th Divn.; partly a battalion (II/203rd R.I.R.) of the relieved 43rd Res. Divn., acting as counter-attack battalion for the 13th Divn.; partly small bodies of specialist troops together with remnants of those that had made the stands already described, east and west of Morcourt. The I/13th and III/203rd had been camped in St. Germain Wood, in the valley leading from Proyard to the Somme, when the sounds of battle caused Capt. Dultz, commanding the I/13th, to send a patrol to brigade H.Q. at Morcourt and himself with his company commanders to reconnoitre Hill 84 (the wheat-covered plateau three-quarters of a mile north-west of Proyard). The resting section of signallers of the 13th Divn. was already there, with one light trench-mortar; and a divisional order now reached Dultz to occupy the hill. On his left he even placed a group of headquarters clerks and others (known as his "little reserve"). The II/203rd lay next, and north of it the signallers (40-50 men), the remnants of the III/15th (40 strong), and I/55th, two resting platoons of engineers, and some fragments of the 97th I.R., all the last named being on the isolated hill in the Somme bend north of Méricourt (called by the Germans the "Georgs-Berg"). To the south was no one. At 11 (says the history of the 15th I.R.) artillery fire was laid on these troops.²⁹ British aeroplanes again attacked. The assault of the 48th and 16th Battalions wiped out the II/203rd, the "little reserve," and the left of the I/13th. The tank "Orpheus" all but reached Capt. Dultz's headquarters³⁰ when a trench-mortar there put several bombs into it. The left fell back down the hill to St. Germain Wood. The troops without equipment, who had advanced against Aarons' company, were evidently some specialist unit from the Georgs-Berg.



On the Somme slope Lieut. Smith's³¹ company, under

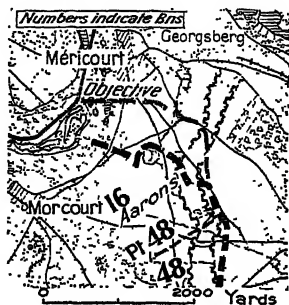
²⁸ That is, to surrender. Germans asking to surrender usually appealed, "Mercy, Kamerad."

²⁹ This account says "strong" fire. The commander of the 9/243rd Bty., however, whose guns had been brought up behind the hill and had knocked out four tanks near the Roman road, says there was little artillery-fire. On catching sight of a British armoured car in his rear, near Proyard and his limbers, he withdrew his battery.

³⁰ The troops on Hill 84 were temporarily combined as "Regiment Dultz."

³¹ Lt. (tempy. Capt.) H. Smith, M.C.; 16th Bn. Sleeper cutter; of Yarloop, W.A.; b. Koondrook, Vic., 1884.

fire of field-guns across the river, took shelter in some old gun-pits for the rest of the day, waiting till dusk to advance a little farther. Patrols sent to Méricourt found the enemy there apparently ready to flee, but the 16th, which in the advance had lost more than a third of its rifle strength, had to hold over 2,200 yards of front with some 300 men. Not wishing to have Germans on three sides, Capt. Aarons withdrew his northern posts in the Amiens trenches to a line 500 yards short of the objective.



The troops seen in Méricourt were a remnant of the I/97th still under Lt. Imig, and parts of its resting battalion, the II/97th, and of the I/202nd from Cateaux Woods. The rest of these battalions had been sent to hold the Chipilly ridge.

On Hill 84, at 1.30 two of the 16th Battalion's tanks under Lieuts. Devenish³² and Kennare³³ came up and placed their machine and Lewis gunners in the Amiens line.³⁴ A machine-gun crew under Sergt. Disney,³⁵ avoiding the heat inside their tank, marched to the Amiens line behind it and captured six or seven posts under cover of the tank's fire.³⁶

Except for the extreme northern flank, south of Méricourt, and the extreme southern one, east and south-east of Harbonnières, in each of which sectors the local troops realised that some organised enemy force was ahead, the Australian Corps had, before 1.30, reached its furthestmost planned objective; and only at one point had progress been affected by the decision,

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³² Lt. H. A. Devenish, M.C.; 16th Bn. Auctioneer and estate agent; of Guildford, W.A.; b. Guildford, 20 Dec. 1881.

³³ Lt. J. H. Kennare, 4th M.G. Coy. Public servant; of Semaphore, S.A.; b. Gawler, S.A., 22 Dec. 1890. Died 20 Feb. 1933.

³⁴ Devenish was told by a tank company commander that he could not go "over the top"; he saw, however, that it had to be done and went forward, walking outside the tank with its commander and directing it. He was wounded returning to get the wounded from his tank when it was hit. Both tanks managed to get back and lay near Lynas's.

³⁵ Sgt. C. Disney, M.M. (No. 1185; 4th M.G. Coy.). Carpenter; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 27 June 1882. Died 25 June 1937.

³⁶ Cpl. H. P. Hamill (Wonthaggi, Vic.) and L.-Cpl. W. A. Hope (Warrnambool, Vic.), of the 4th M.G. Coy., whose tank had broken down near Hamel, managed, by using horse and tank transport as these came along, to get their machine-guns also to the line.

during the operation, of any officer on the British side higher than brigadier—and there only negatively. The 11th Australian Field Artillery Brigade,³⁷ whose gunners as early as 8.45 could see the German field-guns in Malard Wood causing great damage, asked to be allowed to turn its fire north of the Somme. Reports from III Corps (based on several air reconnaissances), that the British had taken that ground,³⁸ caused the request to be refused. Accordingly for three hours the German batteries were able to pursue a method which is well described in their own history.

"While the left section of the 8th Battery³⁹ 13th Field Artillery Regt. covered the right flank (*i.e.*, against the British), the right section of this battery, together with the adjoining battery, as well as the 13th emplaced in the same wood with its long-range guns, and the 9th Battery farther on, shot with full effect at the English advance [that is, the Australian advance, south of the river] at all ranges. Single guns actually firing case shot from time to time, held down the British attacking detachments (58th Division) which lay up to a few hundred metres in front of the gun-positions, for in front of the left third of the artillery position of our division there were no longer any of our own infantry."

Besides the three batteries abovementioned, five and a half others (according to the official German monograph) took part in the firing on the Australian flank.⁴⁰ At 10.20 an attack by 300 British caused the 9th Battery (13th F.A.R.) to leave its guns, but the others were manned till after noon. About this time the commander of the 11th Australian Howitzer Battery turned his guns upon those in Malard Wood despite the orders to the contrary. Up at the Red Line an officer of the 4th Pioneers⁴¹ while reconnoitring saw through the trees two of the Chipilly guns and got some machine-gunners to fire on them. The German gunners immediately blew out the machine-guns. The officer then pointed them out to the artillery. The

³⁷ Attached to the 1st Inf. Bde., itself temporarily attached as reserve to the 4th Div.

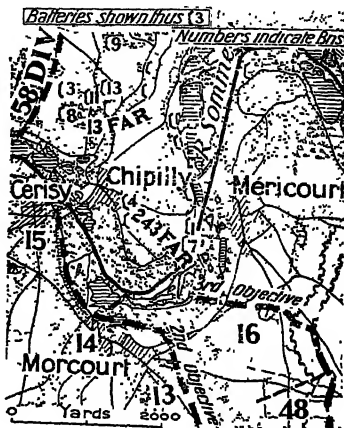
³⁸ The misunderstanding was due to sections of the 18th and 58th Divs. having in the original attack reached their second objective at the brickfield and Gressaire Wood, and to their holding on there for a considerable time although Germans held the ground farther south.

³⁹ The German battery commander was Res.-Lt. Schmidt.

⁴⁰ *Schlachten des Weltkrieges*, Vol. 36 (*Die Katastrophe des 8 August 1918*), pp. 60-1. The statement of the historian of the 13th Bn. that it was fired on by 16 guns north of the river may therefore be within the mark.

⁴¹ Either Capt. G. G. Manning (Traralgon, Vic.) who was shortly afterwards killed, or Capt. R. R. Bingle (Armadale, Vic.) who was mortally wounded by the same shell. Their work—to lay out a strong-point—was carried through by Sgt. E. A. Sumner (Ottaway, S.A.).

section of the 37th Battery⁴² far up with the 13th Battalion near "Farmer Wood" turned on them and the 39th Battery, which came up later to the same place, swung a section actually rearwards and engaged a 4.2-inch gun near Malard Wood that was firing into the rear of the 16th Battalion during its attack.⁴³ In each case the Germans replied by bursting shells among the guns' crews. Two Australian guns had temporarily to be abandoned; teams dashed up to withdraw them and though shells killed and wounded a number of horses and drivers they were got out.⁴⁴ Farther back along the Somme valley two guns of the 38th Battery placed by Maj. de Low



behind the trees west of Cérisy, and now firing indirect, put their first shell under the muzzles of the Célestins guns. A number of machine-gunners and Lewis gunners, especially with the 15th Battalion around Cérisy, had from time to time forced the German artillerymen to shelter.⁴⁵

Under these attacks the German artillery north of the river had already lost much of its sting when by 12.30 the advance of the 16th Battalion was reaching the Amiens line.

The history of the 13th F.A.R. says that at 12.15 its 3rd Battery was abandoned. "Meanwhile the 8th Battery, through strong English artillery fire with air observation, had been heavily punished. When at 12.45 p.m.

⁴² Under Lt. C. S. Smith (Stanthorpe, Q'land).

⁴³ Capt. A. O. Smith, commanding this battery, had asked continually for leave to shell the German guns, saying that he could see them. Brig.-Gen. Burgess was obliged to answer that III Corps said that it held the ground where the German guns were. Eventually he gave Smith leave to fire if he could see the flash of the guns.

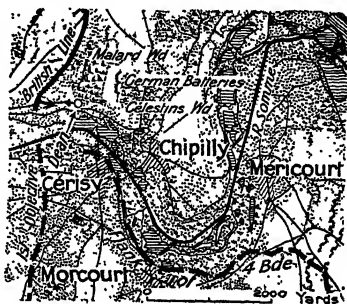
⁴⁴ Sgt. S. J. Watson (Adelaide), after one gun-team had been blown out and four men killed, volunteered to get the gun out and did so. Bdr. J. C. Simcock (Sydney) and Dvr. L. Hay (Tingha, N.S.W.) when the four leading horses in their team were killed, cut free and extricated the wheelers. Dvr. W. D. Denton, (Bingara, N.S.W.) and his team pulled out the other gun.

⁴⁵ Thus L.-Sgt. R. A. Jeffers (Cora Lynn, Vic.) of the 14th Bn., taking some Lewis gunners to the river bank, drove the German artillerymen from their pieces at the southern end of Chipilly; at the request of Col. Crowther (14th) the same was done by Lts. P. H. Wright (Brisbane) and A. T. Chapman (Kennington, London, and Sydney), 4th M.G. Coy.

the company of the 127th I.R. lying behind the battery was ordered to retire to Chipilly spur, the position had to be given up."

The British (58th Division) immediately occupied the site of the two batteries highest in the wood.

The inability of III Corps to capture Chipilly Peninsula in rear of his left was General Monash's dominating concern. Throughout the attack reports from the Australian infantry came through with unusual rapidity. From 9.5 a.m. messages from III Corps, that its objectives had been duly captured, alternated with reports from the 4th Australian Brigade that its troops and tanks were being machine-gunned and shelled from those positions. Maj. Sampson (15th) sent across the river Lieut. Simon, who found the 3rd London held up south-west of Malard Wood, half a mile in rear of the 15th's flank. A couple of the engineers of the 12th Australian Field Company, mending the bridge by which Simon crossed, could see that the British flank company was held up by a nest of machine-gunners under the cliff at the foot of the northern slope. One of them, Sapper Dean,⁴⁶ decided to end this deadlock by rushing the position from the flank. With his mate, Sapper Campbell,⁴⁷ he ran across the open meadow, several hundred yards wide. The Germans seeing them coming, and apparently imagining that more would follow, raised a white flag. The British then came up, took the prisoners, and advanced to a point north of Cérisy.



London's attack shown thus →

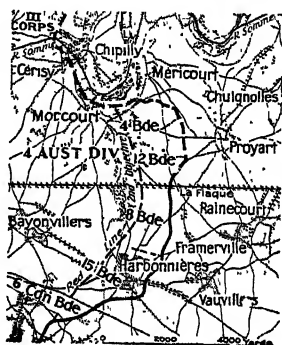
Meanwhile at 11 o'clock (according to a message from the Australian *liaison* officer) the commander of the 58th Division, becoming uncertain as to the position reached by his troops, decided that the battalion that had captured Saily-Laurette. 2/10th London, should attack the Chipilly peninsula. The 4th

⁴⁶ Spr. A. E. Dean, D.C.M. (No. 6211; 12th Fld. Coy., Engineers). Carpenter; of Hobart; b. Moonah, Tas., 8 Dec. 1893.

⁴⁷ Spr. W. Campbell, D.C.M. (No. 5057, 12th Fld. Coy.; and No. 8826, 2nd/13th Fld. Coy., A.I.F., 1939). Saddler; of Daylesford, Vic.; b. Daylesford, 21 Apr. 1897.

Australian Division's artillery was asked to shell Chipilly with all available guns. About this time the 15th Battalion in Cérisy saw Germans coming over Chipilly spur into the village and thence across the flat towards Célestins Wood.⁴⁸ But then, or soon after, the German gun-crews retired from the wood and infantry of the 58th Division advanced thus far, approximately to the alignment of the first Australian objective.

In front of the Australian centre, when it reached the final objective, opposition seemed to have vanished. To what extent the German forces there had been swept clear was not then accurately known, but to all appearances between 11 a.m. and noon the Australian infantry could have walked on, certainly to the neighbourhood of Proyard, Framerville, and Vauvillers, possibly through or around those villages, without serious opposition. North of the Roman road some skirmishing might have been necessary at La Flaque, but that was the kind of warfare in which the Australian infantry excelled; and for a mile and a half south of the road the cavalry and cars had actually captured the country. Here Col. Freeman of the 31st Battalion asked for leave to go on. Lieut. Rollings of the armoured cars sent a pigeon message from Framerville at 11.10:



If they (the Australian infantry digging in on the final objective) wished to go further, all is clear.

Lieut.-Col. Johnston⁴⁹ of the 45th at noon telegraphed:

Can you get the 1st Division to exploit success?

For some hours the armoured cars patrolled the Roman road through La Flaque without hindrance and as late as 4.30 a staff car of the Fourth Army drove thither before it was stopped by fire. North of the road, the 48th and 16th Battalions, holding

⁴⁸ These were possibly part of the III/137th I.R., or of the 1/201st R.I.R. sent to reinforce it.

⁴⁹ Lt.-Col. C. M. Johnston, D.S.O.; 15th Bn. Bde. Maj., 4th Inf. Bde., 1917-18; commanded 45th Bn., 1918, 15th Bn., 1918-19. Law student; of Glenbuntly, Vic.; b. Albert Park, Vic., 12 May 1892. Died 10 Apr., 1941.

nearly three miles of front with 600-700 rifles, were at first heavily taxed to cover this space.⁵⁰ But in the troops fortifying the Red Line both the centre brigades (8th and 12th) had ample reserves which, though tired, could and willingly would have answered an order to push on at once. Three miles farther back four brigades of the 2nd and 3rd Divisions digging on the first objective were released at 11.15 by General Monash from that now unnecessary work, and their two other brigades (6th and 10th) in the old front line were waiting for orders.

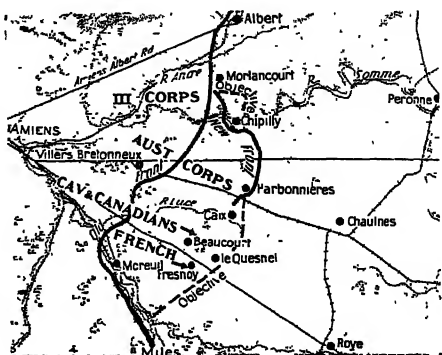
There were thus ample troops both for continuing the thrust astride the Roman road and for safeguarding the gains already secured. What was the attitude of the command? Monash knew by 11 o'clock from the contact aeroplanes that the second objective was being everywhere reached and that the cavalry working with the 5th Division were through. By 11.30 he knew by the same means⁵¹ that the 5th Division was nearing its final objective; and 5th Division told him that the armoured cars had long since passed La Flaque on the Roman road. News from the Canadian and III Corps was then, as far as it went, equally favourable.

But the day's plan was definite—having seized the two forward objectives, to fortify them so that no German effort could retake them. Such a success attained in half a day's fighting was so far beyond anything yet experienced by British or over-sea troops on the Western Front that its achievement, which by 11 o'clock was becoming apparent to every participant, was a matter for general marvelling. On the battlefield each man guessed from what he could see that progress elsewhere was on the same scale; shortly after 3.30 General Monash knew that for five miles south of the Australian front success was overwhelming—the French about Fresnoy south of the Roye road and the Canadians at Beaucourt north of it had, hours before, been approaching their final objective. Success had been sweeping; a great step in the war had

⁵⁰ They were, however, well covered by machine-guns.

⁵¹ Two contact 'planes of the 3rd Sqn. went out at 10.30, two at 11, and one at 3.30. The airmen marked on their maps the positions of some advanced tanks and of the flares lit all along the line by the infantry. Maps were then dropped at the headquarters of divisions and corps and at the Fourth Army's report centre. In spite of the overwhelming numbers of British 'planes in the air, most of the contact machines were attacked, and one patrolling over Méricourt valley at noon was shot down, the pilot and observer, Lts. E. J. Bice (Canterbury, Vic.) and J. E. Chapman (Bowenvale, Vic.), being killed.

clearly been completed, and, from front-line "Digger" to General Rawlinson, nearly every one was congratulating both his neighbours and himself. The casualties had been far lighter than were ever before suffered in such an action on the British front,⁵² and the captures of prisoners and guns much greater. From German histories we now know that nearly the whole garrison of the German line opposite the Fourth Army south of the Somme—front line, supports, immediate reserves, and artillery

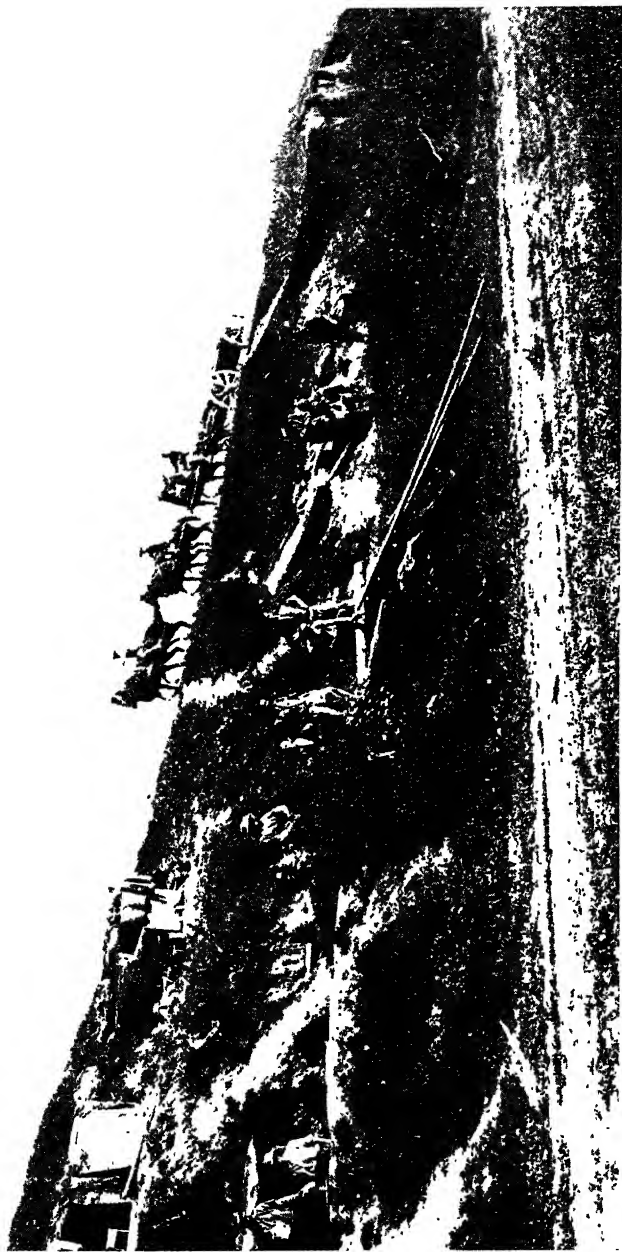


in the line—were captured or destroyed. On the Australian front the only remnants were two half-battalions on the north, half a battalion on the south, part of one field battery, and a few bodies of company strength, either fragments or specialists. Even of the counter-attack division just relieved from the line, two battalions had disappeared.⁵³

For the moment everyone's thoughts turned to what had been done rather than to the next step. It is true that three days earlier Rawlinson had been reminded of Haig's intention to take advantage of any success by pushing farther, and had stated it next day to his corps commanders. But he had indicated that the main thrust would then be towards the line Roye-Chaulnes, on the Canadian front, the cavalry forming the spearhead for the Canadians, and the Australians and III Corps merely swinging forward to form the northern flank. Monash, probably following Rawlinson, regarded the battle as

⁵² In the Aust. Corps probably 1,000 men had been hit in reaching the first objective and another 1,000 in gaining the second and third—that is, 500 men per division throughout. At Cambrai, the only comparable battle in this respect, the average first day's casualties appear to have been considerably heavier. The casualties for 7-14 Aug., 1918, are given at the end of the next chapter. Captures included some 4,000 prisoners, 80 field-guns, 40 trench-mortars, and 350 machine-guns.

⁵³ Half of the II/97th and II/13th I.R. remained in the north, half of the I/148th in the south. Of the tired infantry of the 43rd Res. Div., the I/201st and II/203rd R.I.R. had been lost, and the I/202nd also had been thrown in. The rest was in camp at Cappy, Fontaine, and near Péronne.



27. THE EASTERN SIDE OF MORCOURT GULLY

The photograph was taken on 14th August, 1918 when the field artillery had taken position there and shows a wagon of the 12th Army Brigade, Australian Field Artillery, bringing ammunition.

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E2931.

To face p. 600.



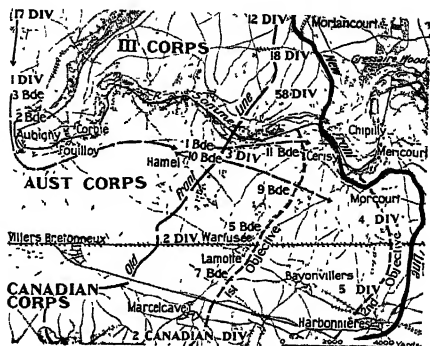
28. GERMAN ARTILLERY WAGGONS SHOT UP BY THE ARMoured CARS IN FRAMICOURT ON 8TH AUGUST, 1918

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E2917.

To face p 601

a static one—its object being to free Amiens—and his belief certainly was that the whole operation would be a limited thrust. It is true that by 12.45 on August 8th he had received from Rawlinson an indication that the Canadians and cavalry might continue their thrust early next morning, in which case the Australians south of the Roman road would swing up their flank. By 11 a.m. he had ordered his reserve division, the 1st Australian, to march its two brigades to Aubigny and Hamel behind the old front line,⁵⁴ and to be ready for battle at short notice, and Fourth Army ordered the 17th British Division to move down the Hallue valley behind it. The four brigades of the 2nd and 3rd Divisions resting at the first objective were to be ready to march at an hour's notice, but were told that they were unlikely to be required until 5 next morning.

But of any notion of occupying the ground ahead of the Australian infantry while it was almost vacant the records contain no trace. Monash was apparently preoccupied with two determinations—to consolidate the position taken, and to safeguard his left flank against possible counter-attack from across the Somme. For the latter purpose Maj.-General MacLagan (4th Division) at 12.30 directed his reserve (the 1st Brigade, then waiting east of Hamel) to move up, and later ordered it to establish a line behind the 15th Battalion at Cérisy. At 2.56 Monash ordered part of his corps reserve, the 10th Brigade (3rd Division), to move that night to Morcourt close behind the northern corner of the corps front. Meanwhile at about 12.30 the bombardment of Chipilly began,



⁵⁴ The 2nd Bde. went from about Ailly le Haut Clocher to Aubigny partly by bus, marching the last five miles; the 3rd Bde. marched from about Coisy to Hamel, 14 or 16 miles. The 1st Bde. was temporarily acting as reserve to the 4th Div. in place of the 13th.

and at intervals until 2.25 p.m. that village was invisible through churning shell-smoke. Germans fled from it to the rear; but when the bombardment ceased, although British infantry could be seen advancing high on the plateau by the Bray-Corbie road, Chipilly village and spur were not taken. Although the Germans held the northern flats, work on the bridges over the Somme canal was carried out by engineers of the 12th Field Company. Lieut. Hunt⁵⁵ not only examined and repaired the bridges but brought to the water's edge at Cérisy five waggons with pontoons ready for throwing across.⁵⁶ In the afternoon Chipilly appeared to be empty and a patrol of the Northumberland Hussars (58th Division) reconnoitred its outskirts. In the evening at 7.30 another attack was made, without bombardment. Men of the 2/10th London apparently reached the village but, being isolated, fell back. On the heights the vital part of the objective, reaching to Gressaire Wood and thence south of it, was also reported to have been captured. As before, however, only unconnected parties seem to have penetrated and afterwards they fell back to the first objective.⁵⁷ The Australian flank for two miles east of Cérisy remained exposed.

The other task, consolidation, was carried out in almost unbroken quiet on the whole Australian front—south of the Somme hardly a shell was fired. Infantry, engineers, and pioneers wired a considerable part of the second objective, working through the afternoon and most of the night. Parts of the third objective also were wired. The wire and pickets came largely from the German dumps, the problem of transport being thus lightened.⁵⁸ The line was strongly supported by machine-guns and trench-mortars.⁵⁹ The field artillery took position behind the second objective and the "heavies" largely in the valley just behind the first. Even some of the many intact

⁵⁵ Lt. R. A. Hunt, D.S.O.; 12th Fld. Coy., Engineers. Civil engineer. General Superintendent at Yallourn, State Electricity Commn. of Vic., since 1938; of Brighton, Vic.; b. Brighton, 13 Mar. 1891.

⁵⁶ In the end they were not required and were sent back.

⁵⁷ Actually the line held that night fell slightly short of this.

⁵⁸ The 15th Bde. was served by three supply tanks, the 4th by one. On the first objective the 9th and 5th each had one. The 8th and 12th Bdes. had to arrange hastily for other means of transport. By 6.10 p.m. the 4th Div. had delivered 30 waggon loads, mainly to the 4th Bde. for which less German material was available.

⁵⁹ After the first bombardment there was little chance of using any of the trench-mortars.

German guns were manned,⁶⁰ with more moral than material effect, and many German machine-guns were mounted in the defences. At the new front line the old trenches gave excellent cover.

Meanwhile, for a couple of hours in the early afternoon the armoured cars tried to make a second series of reconnaissances, but the road over Lihons hill to Chaulnes was found to be blocked by a steam-waggon east of Harbonnières, and passage on the Roman road was barred by a field-gun at Froissy valley, near Rainecourt. Most of the Australian front-line posts dug, slept, or discussed the marvels of the day. Ahead of the front line, engineers raised steam in the railway engine that had been hauling the big gun; leaving a long string of carriages on the plain ahead of the Amiens line, they shunted the gun and the trucks for crew and ammunition two miles inside the line.⁶¹ In the drowsy mid-afternoon patrols and sentries began to note at several places Germans moving on the plateau ahead. Above Proyart a British aeroplane fired a flare, and the posts of the 48th Battalion saw 400 Germans coming from the dip in which the roofs of the village were visible. The Royal Horse Artillery opened at once and 150 Germans ran back, but the rest lined out and dug in half a mile from the Australian posts. South of the road the 30th Battalion received sniping shots from Vauvillers. General Monash, whose news of the Germans had till then mainly described their flight,⁶² learned

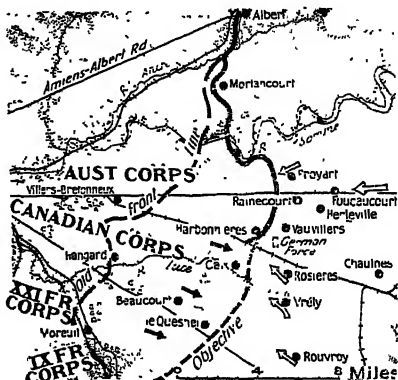
⁶⁰ In many instances the "Diggers" amused themselves by firing off German ammunition—to avoid accidents, at extreme range. Several guns were used by the artillery. The H.T.M. Bty. (Lt. F. C. S. Bond), after finishing its work, was employed in manning, first, some 5.9-inch howitzers; as ammunition for these was lacking, it was afterwards formed into a battery of 4.2-inch, one section (Lt. H. L. Newland) with guns and one (Lt. P. R. Barron) with howitzers. These, with the mortars, were in action under the 14th H.A. Bde. from Aug. 11 until Sep. 5, being first posted near Harbonnières and firing on cross-roads at Ablaincourt. (Bond belonged to Bruthen, Vic.; Newland to Laverton, Vic.; Barron to Mt. Bauple and Toowong, Q'land.)

⁶¹ Lt. G. Burrows (of Sydney, attached to the 8th Fld. Coy.) with Sprs. L. J. Strahan (Arrino, W.A.) and J. H. Palmer (Booval, Q'land) raised steam, shunted the burning coaches, coupled up the gun and ammunition trucks, and brought them to the north of Harbonnières where a break in the rails stopped them. This was repaired next day, and although the working party was shelled, and at one time the gun ran back off the rails (which had been cut to repair the break ahead), the gun was eventually brought to a back area. It was exhibited in Paris and is now in Canberra. Its range was 26,000 yards, and throughout the summer it had fired from north of Wiencourt on Amiens, 23,000 yards away. It had first been located by the 5th Brit. Survey Coy. on May 3, and was frequently engaged, the train or truck being sometimes hit (see account by Lt.-Col. G. E. Manchester in *Reveille*, 1 July 1934).

⁶² At about 11.40, however, airmen reported having seen German infantry marching up the Roman road two miles beyond Foucaucourt. (They could reach the front by 2 o'clock.)

between 5 and 6 p.m. from armoured cars and aeroplanes that enemy machine-gunners had fired at 2.15 from Rainecourt, Herleville, and Foucaucourt; that Germans were digging in a mile ahead of the 15th Brigade's right, south-west of Vauvillers; that in front of the Canadians, south of the Australian flank, the cavalry was pushing on to Rosières, and German troops and transport were retiring, but that at 4.20 considerable forces of infantry were rushing up to that front along the roads through Rouvrois, Vrély, and Rosières, and on his own front a battalion had been seen marching up the Roman road at 1.30 towards Foucaucourt. Thus if Monash, when at 11.30 he heard of the penetration of the armoured cars, had thought of continuing the advance on a divisional front astride of the Roman road while opposition was absent, he must have known by 6 o'clock that within three hours of its appearance the opportunity had vanished. No order that he could have given on hearing of it could have reached the troops in time. The villages could have been captured only by instant action of the commanders on the spot, possibly without previous reference even to divisional headquarters, division and corps being merely informed of steps already taken by patrols.⁶³ It is doubtful if the granting of such freedom to subordinates was ever contemplated by Rawlinson or Monash in devising or carrying out this day's plan.

For the Australians, at least, this battle was the greatest "set piece" of the war; the plans worked up to the final fortification of the two last objectives against possible counter-



Movements known to be in progress shown by arrows, British black, German white.

⁶³ In such a case Monash would probably have laid down objectives beyond which the main line of infantry must not go, and forbidden its becoming involved in any serious attack.

attack. Much of the defensive precaution was now needless; no counterstroke that the enemy, in his then state of disorganisation, could conceivably have delivered—indeed no reserves of infantry and artillery that the Germans could have brought up within several days—could have made any serious impression on even the weakest part of the Australian front; but no British commander of that time carrying out such an offensive could quickly have dismissed from his mind the expectation of a formidable lunge in reply.

So the Red and Blue Lines were fortified. Meanwhile the regimental "cookers," with a hot dinner, and the water-carts reached the resting brigades on the first objective early in the afternoon; and, as surely as in trench-warfare, the battalion quartermasters provided even the posts along the front line with a hot meal between 7 o'clock and midnight. Wells were quickly found in the villages, tested and guarded, and buckets and windlasses fixed.⁶⁴ Ammunition dropped with parachutes by aeroplanes fell near some of the forward posts just when needed. The experience of the great majority of the troops throughout the day was that not only aeroplanes, tanks, armoured cars, cavalry, artillery, and machine-guns, but the pioneer parties remaking the roads or attached to each advancing artillery brigade to help it over the trenches; engineers and pioneers for the wells and the Somme bridges, which the Germans had not had time to destroy, and to mark places and tracks with signposts; the transport with working materials, and quartermasters with food and drinks⁶⁵ all came up precisely when needed. The private diary of the Chestnut Troop says "the staff work, timing, and road work were perfect."

The sight of the various services streaming up when the mist rose never passed from the mind of the 50,000 Australians who saw it. Their admiration for the enterprise of tanks, artillery, and aeroplanes is outspoken in scores of narratives, as is their appreciation of the cavalry's dash in spite of its extreme vulnerability to machine-gun fire, which many accounts also note. But the almost perfect co-ordination of all the

⁶⁴ One of the greatest difficulties was provision of water for the cavalry and artillery.

⁶⁵ A tot of rum was issued to some at least of the brigades after the battle.

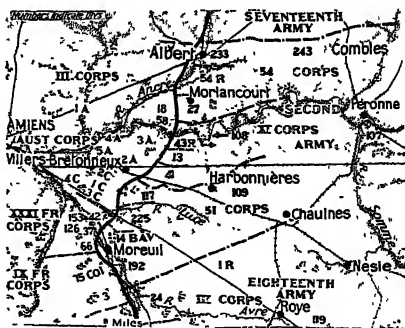
services was the outstanding feature. The usual comment (wrote a Digger⁶⁶ at the time) was, "It was a *très bon* stunt," "I wouldn't have missed it for worlds!" And the main responsibility for the organisation as they saw it they attributed, with justice, to General Monash.

Although the disposition and strength of the German reserves brought up or nearing the battlefield only became partly known to the Australian leaders during the next two days, nevertheless, for the benefit of the reader, the veil that still hid these from Monash and those above and below him may here be lifted.

The Fourth Army had this day attacked with seven infantry divisions in first line against six—probably 38,000 infantry against 18,000;⁶⁷ and with three infantry and three cavalry divisions in the second line, able to strike, though not to complete the blow, before any except a few troops of the three reserve divisions of the three opposing German corps came into action. In reserves the British had five infantry divisions as against one. In all the Allies had concentrated 22 infantry divisions against 12—possibly 115,000 bayonets against 36,000; 3 cavalry divisions against none; 2,650 guns against some 500; 450 British and (in second line) 90 French tanks against none; and 1,900 aeroplanes against 365.

The front attacked this day was nearly the whole sector of the Second German Army—the southernmost of Crown Prince Rupprecht's Army Group. Of the Eighteenth Army (German Crown Prince's Group) only the northernmost regiment was directly involved. In Second Army most of one corps, the 54th, lay north of the front of the main attack, which fell (as shown in the marginal sketch) on its southern division and on seven of the XI and 51st Corps. Each corps had one division in reserve and Second Army had another.

The attack came as an almost complete surprise—more so than any other great offensive of either side on the Western Front. It is true that Ludendorff thought that the French might extend their Marne-Vesle attacks to between the Oise and Somme where the Allies had considerable force, having themselves expected to be attacked there. But he assumed that these efforts would be only local, "for the enemy was also tired. . . ."⁶⁸



⁶⁶ Sgt. F. F. Clausen, M.M. (No. 2154; 59th Bn.). Public servant; of Newport, Vic.; b. North Williamstown, Vic., 8 Mar. 1890.

⁶⁷ Counting a British battalion at 400 rifles, an Australian and Canadian at 490, and a German at 333. Figures for the French front are less easily estimated, but the French threw 5 divisions in first line against 3.

⁶⁸ Ludendorff: *My War Memories*, Vol. II, p. 678.

The Second Army staff also had informed its troops that the local attacks so frequent of late near Villers-Bretonneux were likely to continue. Some German troops there believed an offensive to be impending; Lt. Hammer, adjutant of the II/217th R.I.R. at Hangard, says (in the regimental history) that its imminence was "known" by August 1 and "was the daily topic among officers in the front line." As a proper precaution he sent his baggage home. By Aug. 4 the traffic of hostile troops and lorries at the south-eastern exits of Amiens was impressive—it could be seen even by observers at battalion headquarters.⁶⁹ Men of the 109th Divn., on the nights before their relief on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau, heard traffic near Cachy and the shouting of orders. "After August 4th there could no longer exist any doubt as to the enemy's intentions," says the history of the 26th R.I.R. "From 9.30 p.m. onwards throughout the whole night not only heavy train and road traffic, sound of voices and neighing of horses, but actually the strong noise of motor-engines at Cachy and Villers-Bretonneux were heard by all sections of the troops in the forward lines. All measures for defence against tanks were therefore again carefully tested."

Unfortunately for those who made them, these reports of preparations and "tank noises" began before Aug. 4 and Second Army ordered its troops to "stand to" that morning to meet a possible tank attack about Villers-Bretonneux. But the German staff well knew that tanks preparing to attack did not advertise their presence for days beforehand; and as no attack came on the 4th it was evident (as was the case) that the "tanks" heard were, if anything, motor lorries. The capture of Australian prisoners at Hourges that same night showed that the Australians were relieving the French, presumably to release more troops for Pétain's operations on the Vesle. This relief, Second Army thought, explained the reported movements.⁷⁰ No increase of artillery was noted.⁷¹ It is true that the withdrawal of two Canadian divisions after a short tour near Arras had been noted and a special lookout was ordered to be kept on the fronts of the Third and Fourth British Armies. But the Army Group and O.H.L. agreed with the view expressed by Second Army on July 20: "the English will not put in strong forces on their southern flank; they are much more likely to hold them in support to their front in Flanders and at Arras." The capture of Australians at Hourges strengthened the impression "that absolutely nothing was intended there. The English front was actually being thinned and not thickened."⁷² The presence of Canadian wireless (though not of infantry) in Flanders was detected. In its subsequent report on the Amiens offensive German Second Army said that no signs of any kind of big attack had been observed. It did, however, warn its troops that the sideslip of the Aust. Corps rendered the expected local attacks more likely. But several attempts to take Australian prisoners in order to test this probability failed.

In preparation for the expected local attacks Ludendorff had

⁶⁹ Hammer counted 80 lorries in the Boves area on Aug. 6, and 120 on the 7th, and sent in a report and sketch.

⁷⁰ A report by a German airman that he had seen 100 tanks on the road from Ailly-sur-Noye to Morisel on Aug. 5 was queried by the staffs of First and Second Armies—and was, indeed, incorrect. (*Der Schwarze Tag*, by Lt.-Gen. Ernst Kabisch, p. 53.)

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 63.

authorised the strengthening of this front by the despatch of artillery and by replacing two "specially tired" divisions, the 107th and 109th, by the 27th and 117th—both well rested, and reputed to be of outstanding quality. The 43rd Reserve also was relieved by the 108th, which had been at rest since losing its trenches north of Monument Wood.⁷³ The artillery reinforcements were arriving. Gen. von Kuhl, chief of Crown Prince Rupprecht's staff, was sent by Ludendorff to confer with Gen. von der Marwitz, the irascible chief of the Second Army,⁷⁴ as to the sufficiency of the preparations. Ludendorff seems to have been satisfied. "In this storm-centre," he says, "the divisional fronts were narrow, artillery was plentiful, and the trench system was organised in depth. All experience gained on the 18th of July had been acted upon."⁷⁵ Finally, to allow more attention to be concentrated there he ordered that, before the middle of August, Second Army and the two south of it, Eighteenth and Ninth, should form a new group under Gen. von Boehn.

But Ludendorff distorts the picture; he had little conception of the extent to which the garrison of this front had been worn out. Even Second Army, which had estimated that the only divisions "in urgent need of relief" were the three that were relieved and that the 192nd and 243rd were fit to hold a quiet front, and the 14th Bavarian, 41st, 54th Reserve, 108th and 225th "fit for trench warfare," was grossly mistaken. The German official monograph states that, except for the two fresh divisions, not one of the nine divisions attacked "had nearly 4,000 infantry."⁷⁶ But, as in most armies, the subordinate who fearlessly told even vital truths was not always favoured by strong leaders;⁷⁷ consequently all divisions reported their barbed-wire entanglements sufficient; staff officers sent to inspect these had inspected the *maps* at the various headquarters and found ample entanglements there!⁷⁸ Still less was Ludendorff informed of the moral depression to which his policy had reduced the troops.

Each of the three German corps that were attacked had its counter-attack division; the 54th Corps had the 243rd, the XI the 43rd Reserve, and the 51st the 109th. In addition Second Army had in reserve about Péronne the 107th.⁷⁹ Haig's intelligence staff had calculated that the enemy might throw in four divisions within twenty-four hours. Actually the reserve of the central (XI) corps, the 43rd Res. Divn., was largely overwhelmed in the attack along with the 108th Divn. which had just relieved it, the defence south of the Somme being thus for the moment almost completely swept away.⁸⁰ South of the Roman road the 109th

⁷³ See pp. 359-60.

⁷⁴ Kabisch says he was called "the automatic boiler."

⁷⁵ He adds, however, that less work had been done than by the Eighteenth Army.

⁷⁶ The XI Army Corps stated on July 31 that on an average the forward zone of the 43rd Res. Div. (the weakest in the army) was held by 83 men to the kilometre, its main line of resistance by 275, and the defences in rear of this by 142; that is, a zone 1,000 metres wide by 4,000 deep was held by 500 men (including machine-gunners). This was half the strength hitherto thought necessary for a divisional front—1,000 men to the kilometre.

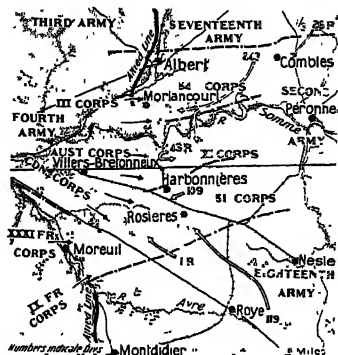
⁷⁷ For a British example, see Vol. IV, p. 886n.

⁷⁸ *Der Schwarze Tag*, p. 50—Kabisch apparently recounts his own experience.

⁷⁹ One regiment of the 243rd Div. also was in army reserve. The three counter-attack divisions also could not be used without leave of Army but this was given by 5.30 a.m.

⁸⁰ The 41st Div. lost 100 officers and 3,096 others, 41 pieces of field artillery and 24 of heavy.

Divn.—just relieved by the 117th, and billeted at Vauvillers, Framerville, and Vrély (a southern outlier of Rosières)—was alarmed at 6 a.m. and hurried towards a group of divisional headquarters near Harbonnières, whither, as already related, the scratch force of 500 from the 225th Divisional School and transport had preceded it. At the same time army headquarters alarmed the 107th Divn. in rest around Péronne, and hurried its infantry and a regiment of artillery in motor lorries along the Roman road. Meanwhile the 51st Corps asked the corps on its right (III Corps, Eighteenth Army) to assemble its reserve division (1st Reserve) close to the army boundary—and found that this step had just been taken; Eighteenth Army also agreed, on the urgent request of Second, to rush its own reserve division, the 119th, to Vrély—where it would be between the 109th and the 1st Reserve. Further, at 6.30, when Second Army realised that the attack did not extend farther north than Morlancourt, it ordered the two available regiments⁸¹ of the 243rd Divn. (54th Corps) to Bray, whence it sent them to the XI (centre) Corps most of whose own troops had been swept away. At 10 a.m. they were given by XI Corps to headquarters of the 108th Divn. which now controlled only the remnants on Hill 84. On this flank too the Army asked help from its neighbour—the Seventeenth Army—which sent at once in lorries a regiment (119th) of its nearest reserve division (26th Reserve) and a brigade of that division's artillery.



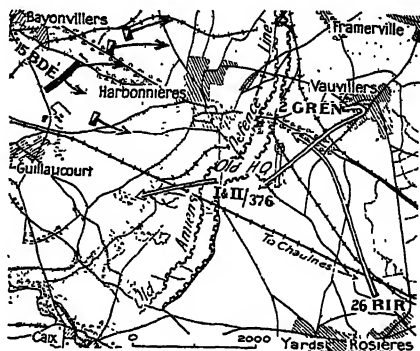
Thus the German Army command did better than Haig's staff expected: at least six reserve divisions reached the battlefield on the day of attack. The first of them to confront the British attack, already in its last stages, was the 109th near Harbonnières. It was two of its regiments with relics of the front-line garrison that had faced the 15th Aust. Bde. there; but although 112 prisoners were taken from it,⁸² neither the strength nor the dispositions of this reinforcement were yet realised.

Along the gully south-east of Harbonnières lay, half-way up its grassy eastern side, a row of sunken huts, formerly built by the British as a headquarters, the huts for mess-rooms and officers being protected by a long bank of spoil on their eastern side, while stairways led from trenches just outside to extensive underground galleries. It was here that (unknown to Monash's staff, for the sector had till lately faced the French) no less than three German divisions—14th Bavarian, 117th, and 225th—had their headquarters. Their scratch guard of 500 had destroyed Arnold's tank. In the pause that then occurred before the cavalry

⁸¹ The 478th and 122nd. The 479th was temporarily left as reserve to the 27th Div., north of the Somme. The 478th left behind one battalion just out of the line—it was replaced by one from the 122nd.

⁸² In the valley south-west of Harbonnières and in the "Willow Copse."

appeared probably the staffs withdrew. Meanwhile at 9.15 the first elements of the 109th Divn. to assemble in this gully—the I & II/376th I.R.—were sent on by Gen. Hoefer, the one-armed, vigorous commander of the 117th Divn., across the railway to the Canadian front. A second regiment, the 2nd Grenadier, now began to arrive. Like the rest of its division, it had been for three months facing the French, until relieved by the 117th Divn. during the last three nights; its last battalion to be relieved—the II—was actually marching into Vauvillers when the bursting of shells there brought the realisation that something unusual was afoot. The brigade order, then received, sent the 26th R.I.R. to the right of the assembly point and the 2nd Grenadier to the left, an awkward arrangement since they had to cross each other's tracks. Falling in at their villages



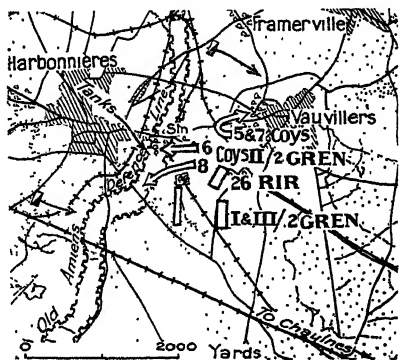
the troops were bombed by airmen, but when once marching in the mist they were fairly safe, though they could hear aeroplanes above. Without the least notion of what was occurring ahead, battalions, and even companies, moved independently until near the assembly ground, when the mist thinned and they were shocked by signs of disaster. "From the front," says the history of the 26th, "came, completely broken up, the wreckage of the line division, a depressing spectacle." The relics of overwhelmed regiments, wounded, ammunition columns, "rabble without arms," are also described in the history of the 2nd Grenadier. A disconnected balloon was floating eastward. Even then no one suspected that the enemy was near. A complete company of the III/26th R.I.R., marching by mistake up the valley south-west (instead of south-east) of Harbonnières⁸³ found itself cut off by dismounted British cavalry quietly lining the gully sides. A mile farther back, in the proper gully, the commander of the I/2nd Grenadier had heard that the British were past the German heavy artillery positions, but would not believe it until "slowly, over the bank of the Amiens-Nesle railway, there glided a tank" on the open flank of the Grenadiers. There was a moment of stir, then of uncertainty, before its fire identified it clearly as hostile. It was at once taken under fire of machine-guns and within three minutes was burning. Another tank was destroyed there soon after.

Having received no orders from Corps as to the use of the 109th Divn., Gen. Hoefer decided that, whatever happened, Harbonnières must be held, and therefore ordered the troops nearest that village, the II/2nd Grenadier, to occupy it. After leaving the shelled Vauvillers, the rear companies (5th and 7th) of that battalion saw British cavalry and cars raiding that village behind them. They hurried back,⁸⁴ helped to

⁸³ The gully down which the I and II/376th I.R. had earlier passed.

⁸⁴ The battalion commander had gone ahead to reconnoitre, and lost control of his companies the moment he left them.

drive off the cavalry, and later occupied Framerville. The 8th company, attacked by airmen, struggled to a copse at the Amiens line south-east of Harbonnières; the 6th made for Harbonnières in the belief that the British were three miles away, and was approaching it through the Willow Copse west of the station when a tank crawled from the village to meet it. The company lined the edge of the wood, the machine-guns were raced up from a cart in rear, and, either by their fire or by that of a trench-mortar, two tanks were shot into flames. Most of the 26th R.I.R. was standing halted a little in rear, the troops opening their haversacks and munching breakfasts. "Suddenly," says its history, "there appeared some artillerymen riding at a wild gallop to the rear. Machine-gun shots fell; a puff of wind parted the wall of fog and two enemy tanks were seen approaching . . . followed at a wide distance by enemy infantry. The surprise was mutual, for the tanks apparently had till then been firing only on fugitives. . . . Our troops for a moment lost their heads." These companies were rallied,



however, after falling back 100 yards. The Australian infantry (obviously the 59th Bn.) was fired on whenever it emerged from the houses of Harbonnières, and is said to have been "very slow to advance"; the 6th company sheltered in craters and covered them with grass. Of the other regiment of the division, the 376th I.R., the III Bn. became involved in the fight with the cavalry on either side of Vauvillers.⁸⁵ The guns run down by the cavalry belonged to batteries with the 109th Divn. which had come up before their infantry, who later found there several guns without crews, though one of them with its team of horses.

At 9.50 the staff of the 109th Divn. reached Hoefier. It informed the Corps that it had six battalions and "some" artillery, and was thereupon ordered to counter-attack and secure a line north-east of Harbonnières—western edge of Harbonnières—Cayeux (in the Luce valley).⁸⁶ What had happened to the two battalions of the 376th south of the railway was unknown; but Division ordered the 26th R.I.R. (with the II/2nd Grenadier) to attack north of Harbonnières and the 2nd Grenadier and III/376th south of the village.

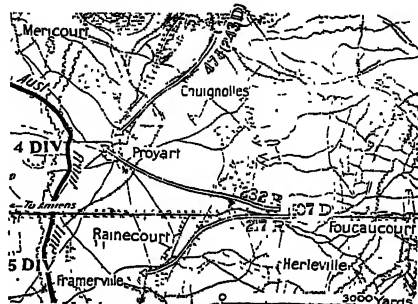
But it was then too late to reach even that modest objective. Two of the six battalions were already engaged in forming the northern flank to Framerville, and the Australians in Harbonnières had stopped the foremost of the others. After a short advance, which, German accounts say, was effectively fired on by advanced British batteries and by machine-guns, and faced by several tanks coming along the gully towards it, the II/26th R.I.R. after crossing the light railway south-

⁸⁵ It had just finished a nine-mile march from the front to near Vermandovillers and had to march four miles back.

⁸⁶ Corps knew that the 107th Div. could not reach Foucaucourt till after noon

from Péronne. After the first panic caused by the armoured cars, that road had been barred by a party of 60 drivers, clerks, and other details of the 225th Divn. under a company sergeant-major.⁸⁹ The party had also rallied a number of stragglers when, probably between 3 and 4 p.m., there came up the 227th and 232nd R.I.R., 107th Divn., whose lorries, as well as the attached artillery, had battled against the stream of retreating transport and fugitives, fortunately for them unbombed, up to a mile east of Foucaucourt whence the regiments had to file forward on foot. Brigade headquarters in Foucaucourt ordered them to deploy south and north of the road

respectively, and then win as much ground as possible westwards. Issuing from the wooded edge of the long Froissy valley the 227th crossed the empty fields past Rainecourt to Framerville, but there met shells and machine-gun fire and stopped. Meanwhile the 232nd after passing through the south of Proyart had found at last some German troops who said they came similarly from the north. They be-



longed to one of the two reserve regiments from north of the Somme, the I/478th I.R., sent to act under the staff of the 108th Divn. These were much later than expected; not till 9 p.m. were both in line—the 122nd bringing in one battalion between 478th and 232nd, and keeping the other in support east of Proyart. The third regiment of the 243rd Divn., the 479th, was supporting the 27th Divn. north of the Somme, but only one battalion⁹⁰ was as yet thrown in.

The thin forces—108th and 107th Divns.—south of the Somme had each brought some artillery. With the 107th came a dozen field batteries,⁹¹ and with the regiments from north of the Somme four. These last were too late for use that day; but, by using resting and composite batteries of the overrun divisions (108th and 43rd Reserve), and some heavy artillery reinforcements not previously put in, the 108th Divn. was supported by nine field batteries and twelve heavier pieces.

Finally the 119th Divn.⁹² whose lorries had struggled along cluttered roads from Roye to Vrély, was at 5.15 p.m. ordered by 51st Corps to attack towards Caix. Advancing at sundown, it was stopped a mile

⁸⁹ Their own division had ordered them to Harbonnières but, after fighting with cavalry near Vauvillers, they were seized on by a staff officer and sent, despite these orders, to the Roman road.

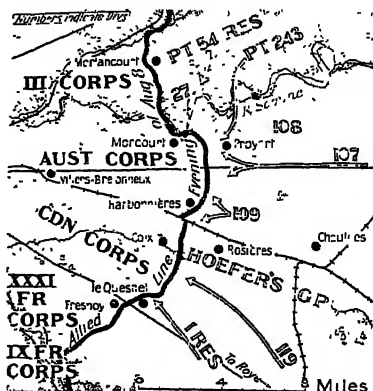
⁹⁰ The III. South of Gressaire Wood. The others were in close reserve near Bray and Etinehem; the 27th Div. north of the Somme was also supported by a battalion of the 246th R.I.R., 54th Res. Div., and in addition was strengthened by that division's extending its flank to the Bray-Corbic road. As on the British side in the confusion of the "Michael" offensive, the Somme was now made the German Corps boundary.

⁹¹ Its own artillery was still under the 27th Div. among the strong artillery concentrated for the attack on Aug. 6. The 107th had also two 5.9-inch howitzers of the 109th Div.

⁹² This division was at exercise near Roye when whistles sounded the "standstill." Field officers were called up. It was next hurried to quarters and embussed.

from that village, but strengthened the line south of Hoefers' group and of the Luce.

Ludendorff attributed the Allies' success on this 'the black day (*der schwarze Tag*) of the German Army in the Great War' to failure of the German soldiers' morale. "Six or seven divisions which could certainly be described as battle-worthy," he says, "had been completely broken. . . ." He was told of "behaviour which, I openly confess, I should not have thought possible in the German Army"—bodies of men surrendering to single troopers; retiring troops shouting "blacklegs" and "you're prolonging the war" at the reserves who went through them. Many German regimental historians explain the Allies' success as due to tanks;



The history of the 119th I.R. (26th Res. Divn.) says: "Everything was affected by the fearful impression that the fire-vomiting iron dragons had made on artillery and infantry. A true tank-panic had seized on everything, and, where any dark shapes moved, men saw the black monster. 'Everything is lost' was the cry that met the incoming battalions."

Kabisch, who points out that the French infantry had no assistance from tanks till late in the attack, says that a more important factor was the mist. But it might equally be pointed out that the attack at Hamel on July 4th went as easily and successfully though there was no mist; and that the attack on June 10th, which "swept away a battalion as if with a sponge," and caused Kabisch himself to warn Second Army that this might happen on a larger scale, happened without tanks, mist, or even surprise. Undoubtedly these three factors helped on August 8th—far the foremost, surprise; second, the tanks; third, the mist. Yet Ludendorff was right in ascribing the defeat largely to the failure of the German garrison, though wrong in casting on that garrison the blame. For it was not

as he believed "battle-worthy"; his own policy had greatly overstrained it especially on the lively Australian fronts where it no sooner dug one outpost-line than this was seized and the tired troops, or fresh ones, were forced to dig another. Australian experience showed that not only "trench divisions" but those rested for attack had been morally strained by Ludendorff's forcing of the 1918 offensive beyond the army's strength and by the commencement (on July 18th) of the inevitable rebound.⁹³ And this infantry was attacked by dominion divisions of which even those that had been long in the line were at the peak of their morale and training.

In other big battles on the Western Front also, armies had made serious breaches in the opposing line, and their commanders had tried to enlarge those breaches, and keep up the surprise and confusion among their enemy, by passing reserves through. Infantry reserves, even carried to the battlefield by automobiles, had always proved too slow to outpace the enemy's reserves; but the Allied leaders, differing in this from the Germans, had believed that the day would come when cavalry would fulfil this vital function and turn a battle into a final rout. Haig with his cavalry training, in particular, clung to this belief and throughout the war, by the vast business of shipping, storing and transporting fodder, of watering, grooming and the other work that their maintenance involved, three cavalry divisions⁹⁴ had been ready for the supreme moment. At crises in the battles of First Somme, Arras and Cambrai, when such chances were for the moment thought to have arrived, the use made of them was disappointing, but Haig and others with the same view were not discouraged.

Now, if ever, the opportunity had come. By the afternoon of August 8th the whole brigaded cavalry force of the British Army had been projected into the enemy's former back area where his reserves were only beginning to arrive. On the Australian front the cavalry created confusion and panic within the mile or two in which it was able to operate before being

⁹³ At Merris on July 30 it made no observable difference to the progress of the Australian attack that the Germans belonged to a completely fresh division.

⁹⁴ Three British and two Indian cavalry divisions were maintained on the Western Front from 1914 until March 1918 when the Indian divisions were sent to Palestine. The French maintained two cavalry corps comprising six divisions. The German cavalry divisions on the Western Front had been transformed to infantry.

hemmed about by machine-guns that its naked men and horses could not face. Farther south it seized parts of the old Amiens line before the enemy could reach them—useful work but not yet such as to justify the vast effort of its maintenance.

At the same time sixteen armoured cars of a practically unknown unit, maintained possibly as a concession to the enthusiasm of a handful of grimy-fingered experts, raced about the enemy's roads, the crews bowling over his transport with impunity from behind their sketchy armour. The cars too had their limitations;⁹⁵ but in the light of events twenty-two years later the student may wonder what might not have been achieved if there had gone into their development the thought, labour, and money that kept the cavalry divisions for years waiting for this day's opportunity.

⁹⁵ They were practically confined to the roads, weakly armed, and vulnerable. They also proved almost useless for scouting. Although the approach of the 19th Div. was carried out almost under the radiators of some of the most active of the armoured cars, the car commanders, from whom Monash hoped to get immediate information of the movement of German reserves, apparently failed to detect it. The only certain indications that reserves were already moving up came from the air.

CHAPTER XV

LIHONS

THE night after the great battle of August 8th was—as the afternoon had been on the Australian front—almost entirely peaceful. The German troops who towards evening had been observed ahead now gave no sign of their presence; the British batteries fired little and the German ones were silent. Shortly before dusk a very big gun somewhere in the German back area tore at intervals immense showers of brown earth from the fields beside the crowded Roman road near Warfusée, close enough, on one occasion, to destroy a couple of teams and their drivers. In the old Amiens line where, since early afternoon, the tired outposts had no longer the spectacle of British car or cavalry patrols to engage their interest, a single horseman rode up to a group of the 59th Battalion. Only when he stood over them did they realize that he was German. He swiped at an Australian with his sword, wounded him under the arm, and galloped away.¹ But the real business of this night was not fighting but fortifying: engineers and infantry dug and wired the Red Line and parts of the final objective and the 1st Brigade took position behind the flank of the 4th, to guard the river crossings at Cérisy.

Next morning almost the whole battle-front remained surprisingly tranquil until nearly noon. True, the Australian and Canadian artillery from their new positions fired registering shots; but even on the front of III Corps, where an effort to reach the previous day's objectives must obviously soon be made, the silence was little broken. Yet at some level of the chain of command in all three corps there had, since day-break, reigned an activity which, comparatively unhurried at its

¹ He was probably a scout of the 3rd Sqn., 1st Uhlan Regt., from which three patrols were sent out by the 107th Div. to locate their enemy at Méricourt, the Roman road, and Harbonnières.

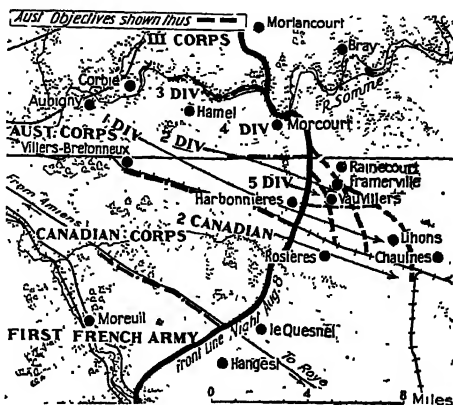
source, as the hour grew later and action approached the front, became increasingly urgent.

At some time before midnight on August 8th General Rawlinson had informed his three corps commanders that the advance of his and Debeney's armies would continue next day, the British objective being the line Roye-Chaulnes-Bray-Dernancourt. The Fourth Army's main thrust would be made on the Canadian front (still between the Amiens-Roye road and Amiens-Chaulnes railway). Here the cavalry was to "gain the objectives of the Canadian Corps" and "facilitate the advance of the French 1st Army." On the other flank, north of the Somme, "particular attention" was to be paid by III Corps to the establishment of a strong position. The task of the Australian Corps depended on the action of its neighbours. On the right it would this day swing up the southern half of its line to Lihons, a ruined village on the far side of the one considerable hill within reach, whose rounded summit rose four miles south-east of Harbonnières and screening Chaulnes a mile and a half beyond. On the left the Australians would not advance until III Corps reached the edge of Bray; the left half of the Australian Corps would then thrust to Chuignolles. The hour for the main operation was to be fixed by General Currie (Canadian Corps) and that for the advance north of the Somme by General Butler (III Corps), each of them as soon as possible informing General Monash.

Already, at noon on the 8th, Monash had warned the divisional commanders concerned that any advance next day would probably be on the southern flank. The 2nd and 3rd Divisions, then behind the original first objective, must be ready to move but were unlikely to be called on before 5 a.m. The left division (4th) would probably make no advance,² but the 1st, which he ordered up to Hamel and Aubigny, must be ready for battle at short notice. Late on the night of the 8th he sent to his divisional commanders an outlined plan for the advance of his right. This would be done in the three stages shown in the marginal map. As the corps sector continually widened (its northern boundary, the Somme, running east and the southern one, the Chaulnes railway, east-south-east), the 1st Division

² He had added that it must be prepared to hold the line for two days and to protect its own left.

would be inserted through the 5th Division's right, to attack with a widening front. In the first stage the left of the 5th would make a flank for it; but what troops would form the left in the later stages depended on whether the second stage began on August 9th—in any case the 2nd Division would eventually come through, relieving the 5th. The 4th Division might "be required to advance its extreme right flank," but otherwise the front of attack would not extend north of the Roman road. Monash hoped that the 3rd would soon relieve the 4th, leaving 1st, 2nd, and 3rd in line, 4th and 5th in reserve. In each stage "a strong body of tanks" would assist, "in order to minimise casualties. The artillery support," Monash added, "will be considerable."



This warning order was followed in the small hours of the 9th by a second³ stating that the attack would be carried out that day, though how far would depend on the progress of the Canadians. In the second stage the 2nd Division would be responsible for the left. The hour for the operation was still unknown, but

it is not anticipated that the attack will be launched before 10 a.m. . . . Troops to be prepared to move to a starting line at very short notice from 7 a.m.

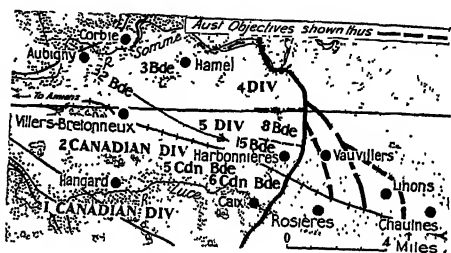
The 1st Division was allotted 14 tanks (of 2nd Tank Battalion, near Wiencourt); the 5th 7 tanks (of 8th Tank Battalion, at Warfusée); the 2nd 15 tanks (of 15th Tank Battalion—Mark V*—north of Warfusée).⁴ The field artillery—four

³ The two were headed Battle Instructions Series B, Nos. 1 and 2 respectively.

⁴ Monash had in reserve 5 tanks (15th Tank Bn.); the 13th Tank Bn. had become Army reserve.

brigades to each division's sector⁵—was to be in position to open fire by 10 a.m.

Monash's first warning order apparently reached the divisions just before midnight, and the second some hours later. But the headquarters of his three divisions now in reserve (1st, 2nd, and 3rd) were not, as in trench-warfare, connected with every brigade and battalion by a telephone system as regular as that of peace time. The 1st Division's headquarters had come to Villers-Bretonneux on the afternoon of the 8th and the two brigades (2nd and 3rd) had marched into their bivouacs two or three miles away, around Aubigny and Hamel, shortly before dusk and before midnight respectively. Maj.-General Glasgow had to send his messages by despatch rider, and it was 3.40 a.m. when Brig.-Genl.



Heane of the 2nd Brigade in Corbie received a warning order,⁶ and 7.20 when the order arrived to march. He too had to send despatch riders to battalions several miles away. He could only tell them to march to a rendezvous near Harbonnières and that further instructions would be given to them on the march. He and Brig.-Genl. Bennett (3rd Brigade) were hurried by car to Glasgow's headquarters at 8 a.m. to receive the full orders. Meanwhile at 8.45 the battalions of the 2nd Brigade began their ten miles' march, moving independently across country with wide distances between successive platoons.

About 1 a.m. the Canadian commander, General Currie, had fixed the hour for starting the attack at 10 o'clock. But at 7.30 the 2nd Canadian Division, next to the Australians, realising that its 6th Brigade, which had reached the Amiens line

⁵ This artillery would be disposed as follows:

| Left Sector (4th Div.) | Centre Sector (5th Div.) | Right Sector (1st Div.) |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 4 Div. Arty. (10 and 11 Bdes.) | 5 Div. Arty. (13 and 14 Bdes.) | 1 Div. Arty. (1 and 2 Bdes.) |
| 12 Army Bde., A.F.A. | 6 Army Bde., A.F.A. | 189 Army Bde., R.F.A. |
| 16 Army Bde., R.H.A. | 23 Army Bde., R.F.A. | 298 Army Bde., R.F.A. |

⁶ This was probably a combination of Monash's two instructions; Glasgow ordered the 2nd Bde. to be prepared to move at 6 a.m., and the 3rd at 8.

after dark, was now faced by a considerable German force along its whole front, had hurriedly to order its support brigade, the 5th, to carry out the right half of the attack. Next, at 8.5, the 1st Canadian Division telephoned to the 2nd that it could not be ready before 11. This information was passed to General Glasgow, and the hour for the attack was changed to 11. Since 7 o'clock, when they learned that the 1st Australian Division was not where they had expected it to be, in the forward area, the staff of the 6th Canadian Brigade had feared that their troops might have to attack with an open flank. At 9.30 the Canadian brigade-major arrived at the headquarters of the Australian brigade next to it in the line, the 15th, and asked Brig.-Genl. H. E. ("Pompey") Elliott whether—as the 1st Division was not in sight—his brigade could help. Elliott after obtaining permission from General Hobbs promised that the 15th Brigade should go forward instead of the 1st Australian Division at the hour mentioned by the brigade-major, 10 o'clock. Capt. Gollan, his own brigade-major, rushed to the two support battalions, 60th and 58th, then in yesterday's Red Line, with an order to leap-frog the two front-line battalions and attack. Within twenty minutes of receiving the order each battalion moved, the 60th at 10 and the 58th at 10.15. If the 60th was late the right line battalion, the 57th, was to advance with the Canadians; but the 57th noted that the Canadians did not advance at 10 and the flank company of the 57th, Lieut. Meara's⁷ was still waiting when at 11, just as the Canadians moved, the 60th came up.⁸

The troops of the 15th Brigade leapt to their task without question—it was unthinkable that the Canadians should be let down. But the undertaking was no easy one. The brigade was given no objective—it was simply to go on till the 1st Division came up. The 1st Division had fourteen tanks, and had dispensed with an artillery barrage presumably because the situation ahead and the rate of the Canadian advance were uncertain, and its own artillery might not be in position.⁹ Thus, while the 6th Canadian Brigade on the right and the 8th Aus-

⁷ Lt. M. J. Meara, M.C.; 57th Bn. Commercial traveller, of Ascot Vale, Vic.; b. North Melbourne, 3 June 1890.

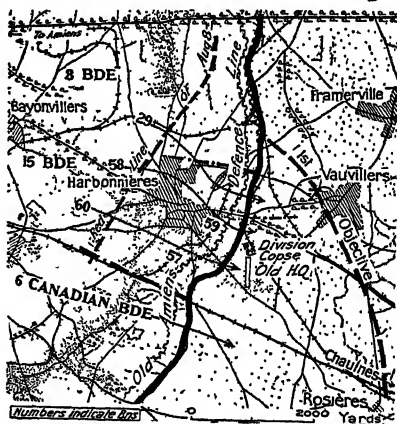
⁸ It had learned the right hour from its officer^c with the Canadians, Lt. G. P. Cooper (Richmond, Vic.).

⁹ The 1st A.F.A. Bde. took position at 10.30 near Bayonvillers.

tralian Brigade on the left would be helped by both a barrage and tanks, the infantry of the 15th Brigade would be without either—except one tank which the Canadians promised to lend.

During the night patrols of the front line battalions, 57th and 59th, had received the impression that the Germans had withdrawn from the Amiens line in front of them. This was confirmed in the morning,¹⁰ when it was also found that since the previous evening the 6th Canadian Brigade had been holding that line south of the railway and cavalry patrols were now moving through them. Through very defective *liaison* no word of the movement had reached the Australian battalion, brigade, or division north of the railway.¹¹ The 57th and the southern company of the 59th now moved up through old communication trenches, but the movement was unfinished when 11 o'clock arrived.

The British cavalry patrols advancing south of the railway had been driven in but the 6th Canadian Brigade advanced promptly at 11 o'clock behind a thin barrage though its tanks were a few minutes late. The 60th and 58th Australian Battalions, as they came up, each on a front of two companies, on either side of Harbonnières, had been shelled during almost the whole movement by several German batteries, but few men were hit. After a few minutes for assembly the 60th, south of Harbonnières, attacked at 11.10; but as it crossed the Amiens



¹⁰ A patrol of the 57th sent at dawn along the railway found the Germans half a mile beyond the Amiens defences in two lines of trenches across the gully there. In the 59th farther north Lt. H. A. L. Binder took a patrol to the trenches east of Harbonnières and found them empty. At 8 a.m. Capt. B. C. S. Southwell sent a patrol under L.-Cpl. C. R. Urquhart (Peakhurst, N.S.W.) with the same result.

¹¹ In the front line the 29th Cdn. Battalion had tried to get touch with Australians north of the railway in the Amiens line, but found Germans there. It also found the Germans too strong to allow posts to be thrust out eastwards there, as was done farther south, but a patrol under Sgt. Rule captured during the night 4 Germans and 4 machine-guns.

line it was met by machine-gun fire so fierce that the companies were forced to ground, and after advancing another 100 yards by rushes were brought to a stop. The 58th came up a little later, east of Harbonnières, and on passing through the 59th was stopped by intense machine-gun fire from about the station ahead and Division Copse to the right front. The southern flank of the 58th was some distance north-west of the left of the 60th, but the right of the 59th in the old Amiens line spontaneously took its place.

The whole line, however, was pinned down by the intensity of the fire. While the 58th lay thus, parties crept out and located four enemy machine-gun posts. Half a dozen Lewis gunners were hit in this effort but the patrols reached a sunken road near the station and from there saw Germans coming towards the station from Division Copse and the line of sunken huts south of it. Fearing for their right, the company commanders of the 58th arranged that Lieut. Deane¹² should transfer his company from the northern to the southern flank, and the German posts should then be attacked by sectional rushes with covering fire.

Meanwhile south of the railway the 6th Canadian Brigade had made a great advance. Headed by four tanks, which reached them just after the start, its troops swept back the Germans on their front; and, though the enemy's artillery now shifted its fire from the Australians on to them, and German machine-guns north of the railway fired into their flank, they managed by 1 o'clock to advance two miles across the plateau to the large village of Rosières, till now an important German railhead. The Germans facing the 60th had thus been out-flanked but they fought well. A number of the 60th, including several officers on the right, were hit in the first few minutes, but the tank lent by the Canadians helped part of Lieut. Cookson's¹³ company to advance along the railway, and a party of Canadians and a platoon under Sergt. Beilby¹⁴ thence seized a copse thirty yards north of the line, from which they

¹² Lt. C. A. Deane, M.C.; 58th Bn. Draughtsman; of Nagambie, Vic.; b. Nagambie, 29 June 1890.

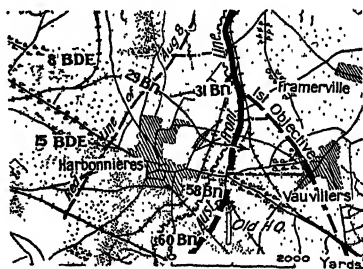
¹³ Lt. C. Cookson, 60th Bn. Auctioneer's assistant; of Melbourne; b. Alexandra, Vic., 1888.

¹⁴ Lt. H. Beilby, M.M.; 60th Bn. Grocer; of Warracknabeal, Vic.; b. Warracknabeal, 16 Feb. 1897.

enfiladed the German left. The Germans were holding the line of sunken huts, and bodies of reinforcing troops now appeared crossing the rise and the light railway behind these. The machine-guns behind the 60th opened fire at nearly a mile's range, and three or four whippet tanks arriving from the Canadian area¹⁵ brought this movement to a halt with their fire, and cleared a post on the German flank. Though they were put out of action by trench-mortars and machine-guns, they diverted fire from the infantry and, together with the advance of the Canadians, forced the Germans to draw back this flank.

Stokes mortars would now have been of great use here but no one thought of sending for them. On the left of the 58th, however, after a tense struggle Capt. Loughnan's¹⁶ company was at last making headway; Harbonnières station was rushed from the flanks.¹⁷ Here Stokes mortars were brought up to shell machine-guns farther on, and the right of the battalion was enabled to get into the dip in front of the main German position. Undoubtedly—though the troops of the two brigades were out of touch and largely unaware of each other's presence—progress on this flank was helped by the advance of the 8th Brigade farther north.

Like the 15th, the 8th Brigade had been unable to rush its support battalion to the line in time to assault punctually.¹⁸ The 29th Battalion, which was to attack next



to the 58th, was shelled as it hurried from yesterday's Red Line past the north of Harbonnières. It attacked at 11.40,

¹⁵ They had been lent by the commander of the 9th Cav. Bde.

¹⁶ Capt. J. Loughnan, M.C.; 58th Bn. Public servant; of East Melbourne; b. Charlton, Vic., 4 Aug. 1889.

¹⁷ Six heavy and four light machine-guns and 20 prisoners were taken there.

¹⁸ Brigade headquarters received the division's order at 7 a.m. Battalion commanders were called to conference held at 8 at Bde. H.Q. near Bayonvillers. There arrangements were made with Lt.-Col. H. O. Caddy, 13th A.F.A. Bde., for a barrage at 11 a.m., to lift from Vauvillers at 11.15. At 9.50 the 29th received a message from its commander, Lt.-Col. J. McArthur, to be ready to move at 10. At 10.10 McArthur got back to the battalion and gave verbal orders to the company commanders already assembled. It was 10.42 before they could return to their companies and start.

when the barrage, a light one, had long since ended. The six tanks that were to have led the brigade¹⁹ had gone on at 11.15. The left of the attack was carried out by a company of the line battalion, the 31st, swinging up with its left on the Amiens line a mile south of the Roman road. Seeing that he would be late, the company commander, Lieut. Towns,²⁰ sent his Lewis gunners forward at 11 under Lieut. Morpeth,²¹ the rest following at 11.15.

But now was seen what General Monash and others took some days to recognise, the extreme helplessness of even the Mark V tank, when unprotected by smoke-shell from supporting field-guns. A single German anti-tank gun, in a shed on the north-western edge of Vauvillers, hit one tank after the other. Before they were half-way to the village the line of them lay disabled.²² The right of Towns's company had to fight down the machine-gun posts as they met them, under intense fire. Two Stokes mortars of the 8th L.T.M. Battery were of the greatest help; on being shelled by them German machine-gun crews came forward with their hands up. On the right, where the 29th was held up by a machine-gun at Vauvillers cemetery, the tank commander, Maj. Bennewith,²³ on request sent up his last machine. It went straight for the village, but was hit by a shell when 200 yards from the cemetery. With the tanks destroyed, field-gun and machine-guns now turned on the 29th, which lost twelve of its officers.²⁴ Nevertheless the advance went slowly on. Sergt. Sinclair,²⁵ whose platoon had outflanked two machine-guns, managed to inform the trench-mortar party of the position of the anti-tank gun. Both mortars were worked into position to shell it, and after fifty rounds the gun's crew came forward

¹⁹ A seventh was kept in reserve.

²⁰ Lt. S. Towns, M.C.; 31st Bn. Clerk; of Prahran, Vic.; b. Prahran, 22 Apr. 1895.

²¹ Lt. W. K. Morpeth, M.C.; 31st Bn. Farmer; of Essendon and Mount Mercer, Vic., b. Ascot Vale, Vic., 1 Jan. 1884.

²² Four were put out of action by this gun, a fifth ditched; the sixth managed to return later.

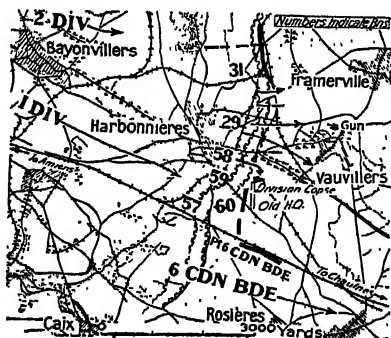
²³ Maj. J. A. Bennewith, D.S.O.; 8th Bn., Tank Corps.

²⁴ Lt.-Col. McArthur was wounded while watching the fight, and Capt. C. A. M. Derham (Kew, Vic.) of the centre company took command. Lts. L. C. Klug (Queenschiff, Vic.) and W. Braden (N. Brighton, Vic.) were killed near Vauvillers. Lt. S. W. Coleman (Paddington, N.S.W.) commanding the left company, was killed by a shell from the field-gun. Lt. P. L. Fowler (Beaconsfield, Tas.) had been killed on the 8th.

²⁵ Sgt. W. L. Sinclair, D.C.M. (No. 1439; 29th Bn.). Bank Official; of Sandringham, Vic.; b. Horsham, Vic., 14 Feb. 1894.

and surrendered. The 29th was able to work round both ends of the village, though actually this lay beyond the brigade's objective.

Meanwhile the 58th, now pressing its advance by rushes of alternate sections, each covering its neighbour with its fire, had been gradually advancing to the north of the line of sunken huts from which resistance had hitherto been so fierce. At this juncture part of the enemy force south of Vauvillers rose. The Victorians firing into them thought an attack was coming, but presently saw that the movement was an ordered withdrawal. Other changes were developing. The 60th had been clinging to the bare ground in front of the German position, helped materially by some machine-guns of the 15th Company, some Stokes mortars, and especially by British aeroplanes which again and again dived at the enemy firing their machine-guns. Lieut.-Col. Layh sought the help of the field artillery which was now in position and about 1 o'clock it began to shell the rise behind the enemy over which reinforcements had tried to come. At the same time battalion after battalion of the 1st Division, which for an hour had streamed down from Bayonvillers to the



sunken Guillaucourt-Harbonnières road along with their fourteen tanks, was assembling hidden in the gully south-west of Harbonnières and battalions of the 2nd Division were coming up north of Bayonvillers and heading for the north of Harbonnières. The Germans had seen these signs and now found the 8th Brigade and 58th Battalion, capturing post after post between Vauvillers and the sunken huts, and thrusting well behind the alignment of Division Copse. The posts on the flank began to break. The 58th followed firing. Farther south Capt. Smith of the 59th, seeing the enemy wavering, ordered his men to rush the sunken huts. The 58th was now advancing "with a roar" into the copses on the northern flank.

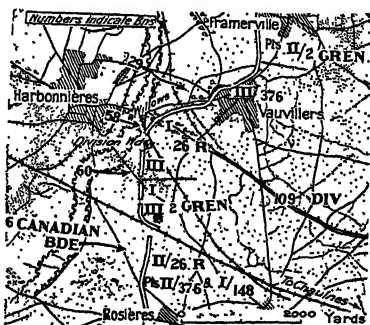
The 60th on the south took up the movement. Some German machine-gunners, at the dugouts fired a few half-hearted bursts and then, as the Australians approached, most of the garrison stood up, threw off its equipment, and came out to be captured; 300 prisoners, 21 machine-guns, and a number of trench-mortars were taken there.

Part of the 58th pressed on, firing at fleeing Germans; the rest, together with the 60th, reorganised hurriedly and came up on the right, followed by the 59th. Just south of Vauvillers the Germans were retiring methodically, from position to position, covered by artillery which unlimbered about every furlong, fired, and limbered up again. The enemy gathered along a lane south of Vauvillers, but fell back again when a post there was rushed, and the 15th Brigade, though blazed at by field-guns visible on Lihons hill, advanced to the lane.²⁶ From the highway, half a mile ahead, came much stronger opposition.

- At this time, 1.45 p.m., the troops of the 1st Division headed by their tanks began to pass through. Officers of the 15th Brigade, with difficulty in some places,²⁷ halted their men.

The Germans who defended the position attacked by the 15th Bde—four weak battalions of the 26th R.I.R. and 2nd Grenadier (109th Divn.)—had fought better than most of the overtired reserves. At dusk on the 8th the III/26th R.I.R., till then in support had been brought up to the line of dugouts to replace the II/26th.²⁸ At the same time the I and III/2nd Grenadier fell back from the old Amiens defences into line with it, keeping their left on the railway. The two advanced companies of the II/2nd Grenadier withdrew from the copses they were holding.²⁹

The Instructional School was sent back to reserve south of Framerville. The Germans thought these changes were unnoticed, and the night passed so quietly that both regiments enjoyed a hot meal, brought up from their



²⁶ More trench-mortars were captured here and some heavier ones farther on.

²⁷ A party of the 59th was past the south of Vauvillers when Lt. G. S. Telfer (Lindenow, Vic.), sent by Lt.-Col. Scanlan, arrived, out of breath, to recall it.

²⁸ The II/26th was sent across the railway to help Hoefers' group.

²⁹ The 26th R.I.R. was not informed, and believed the northern covey was still-held.

"cookers" close in rear, and spent the rest of the time digging themselves in, connecting the dugout entrances, and emplacing machine-guns and trench-mortars until, as the adjutant of the III/26th records, the position appeared impregnable from the front.

Attack did not come as expected, at dawn; but it was noted that the opposing artillery fired only single shots, apparently ranging, while groups of officers could be seen scanning the country from the Chaumes railway and the road-banks south of Harbonnières, and tanks and bodies of infantry moving up to the area about Harbonnières. German accounts describe how at 11 o'clock there appeared swarms of British aeroplanes. The aerodrome of the supporting German squadron had been bombed at dawn and thus no opposition was at hand. It is said that the British airmen flew so low that it was sometimes thought their machines would touch the ground. Some pilots shouted "Surrender!" and one threw a note but was shot down in flames. As the Canadians with their tanks drove through the reserves and oddments³⁰ south of the railway, the III/2nd Grenadier had to fall back making a flank north of the railway. The Germans were evidently puzzled by the movements of the 1st Divn.'s tanks—one account says they were turned back by some marshy ground, others that they were beaten back (actually they were assembling), but the end of the fight is clearly described in the histories of both regiments. The 8th Company of the Grenadier in the centre "heard the cry of 'enemy in rear' and in truth infantry appeared behind us—the English had broken through on our [northern] flank and were now enveloping us in powerful superiority from all sides. All further resistance was hopeless; we had to throw down our arms." This company and practically all the III/26th R.I.R. were captured. That battalion had noted that the British artillery fired mostly at positions behind it. The attacks of airmen had been most trying. Finally Lt. Vialon observed that the Australian infantry in front, coming from the willow copse which he till then believed to be held by the 6/2nd Grenadier, pressed its advance in long rushes, the fire of his rifles and light machine-guns at first showing no effect. He was called to the left, and at last noted "proud and cheerfully that the pauses between the rushes become longer and longer. Running, full of hope, to my right flank group, I arrive at the precise moment when the Australians with bombs and fixed bayonets force their way into the trench. The troops who had advanced from the copse had worked round and seized Division Copse from the rear. So it was this flanking movement, and not, as I had imagined, our effective fire, that had caused the enemy's movements in his frontal attack to be generally slower."³¹

Farther south the I/2nd Grenadier, with a remnant of the III on

³⁰ Hoefers group, including II/26th R.I.R., II/376th and I/148th.

³¹ Vialon tells how he was clubbed, but scrambled to his feet and heard Australians mopping-up the wood shouting "Hands up!" He knocked down "with a boxing punch" two whom he met, but then felt "a fearful blow" in the upper thigh, and crawled to a rifle-pit. Half an hour later, when the 1st Div. came through, he was roughly handled until the men realised that he was wounded. On recovering from the worst fright and pain, he lit the stump of a cigar. "To see this, to rip the stump from my mouth and throw it away, was for an Australian who strolled up from the rear the work of an instant. Then he groped in his greatcoat pocket, drew from it a big tin box, and showered me about twenty cigarettes in one shot. This same man called up a stretcherbearer and the two with their united strength rebanded me well, so that the loss of blood stopped." The Australians carried him to Harbonnières (where he rejoined his captured comrades) and "took their best pains to make our position easier for us." (*History of 26th R.I.R.*, p. 358.)

its left were in extreme danger of being surrounded, when an order arrived to retire to the Lihons heights. They managed to get clear before the Victorians reached the position, but a mile back their commander called a short stand at the crossing of the Vauvillers-Rosières and Harbonnières-Lihons roads. A remnant of the II/26th R.I.R., from south of the railway, made a stand near by, and part of the III/2nd Grenadier at Rosières station.

Meanwhile north of Division Copse the I/26th R.I.R., through whose line the breach was undoubtedly made, retired beyond the Vauvillers-Rosières road.

Elliott's brigade had finished its task magnificently. Though it took two hours to clear the Germans from its front it had directed upon itself a desperate effort of the enemy which otherwise would have been exerted upon the Canadian flank. The commander of the 2nd Canadian Division writing in that division's war diary, after noting that the 15th Brigade was already tired, and not yet supported by artillery, said:

It is difficult to express the appreciation which I, and all units under my command, have for the unselfish spirit in which this decision was made and for the very gallant co-operation which was thus given us.³²

Meanwhile on the left the 29th Battalion (8th Brigade) had, most unexpectedly, taken Vauvillers. The commander of its right company, Lieut. Clayton Davis,³³ who had been knocked unconscious by a shot through the neck, on regaining consciousness took charge of the right and centre companies which had lost all their officers. After reconnoitring south of the village,³⁴ he sent a patrol round that side while he himself advanced through the centre and others round the north, and established posts beyond the village, which was afterwards mopped-up. A German officer and 138 men were sent back as prisoners but the enemy batteries around the village had withdrawn. Ahead of Towns's company (31st) on the left the Germans had retired in regular fashion, covered by a line of snipers.

The troops driven beyond Vauvillers by the 8th Bde. were the III/376th I.R. and part of the II/2nd Grenadier.

The first stage of the attack planned for the 1st Division

³² The diary of the 6th Cdn. Inf. Bde. says: "This prompt and generous action . . . enabled our assault to proceed in the initial stage and saved us numerous casualties." Gen. Currie on leaving Fourth Army wrote to Monash: "There are no troops who have given us as loyal and effective support as the Australians."

³³ Capt. C. E. Davis, D.S.O., M.C.; 29th Bn. Law student; of Toorak, Vic.; b. Malvern, Vic., 25 Sep. 1891.

³⁴ A companion was wounded here, but Davis carried him back.

had thus been almost completed by the 15th Brigade, and the 8th Brigade had done more than its part on the left, when the 1st Division arrived. General Glasgow intended that its first two objectives—the ground up to the near rim of the Lihons summit—should be attacked with only one brigade, the 2nd (Vic.),³⁵ the 3rd (outer States) following it in reserve. At the hurried conference in Villers-Bretonneux the tank commanders agreed with the proposal to dispense with an artillery barrage. If opposition was only slight the 2nd Brigade would go on and take the third objective, Lihons, also, but if it was severe that phase must wait until the 3rd Brigade had taken over the left—that is, probably, until the following day.

The 2nd Brigade had been marching all the morning, with the 3rd a couple of hours behind it. The general dispositions of the 2nd had been settled by General Heane and his battalion commanders the previous morning at Camon³⁶—the 8th Battalion on right, 7th on left, 6th and 5th respectively supporting them, four machine-guns of the 2nd Company with each attacking battalion. The Stokes mortars would be left behind owing to the difficulty of carrying ammunition. At 7.20 on the 9th the battalions were told to march in small parties to the area south-west of Harbonnières³⁷—after the march they would continue yesterday's attack; further details would be explained on the march.

The battalions moved independently, but all crossed the Roman road between Villers-Bretonneux and Warfusée, and as they did so Lieut.-Col. Ulrich³⁸ of the 6th, galloping along it, gave each of his fellow battalion commanders a map marked (at the divisional conference) with the objectives. About 11 a.m., as the battalions marched across country³⁹ north of the railway, their commanders were ordered to confer with Heane, who had hurried to place his headquarters at the factory north of Guillaucourt. Lieut.-Col. Herrod directed the 7th to the

³⁵ According to the original policy two brigades were to be employed, but this seems to have been changed before the brigades marched.

³⁶ On the Albert-Amiens road, near Querrieu. Here blankets, packs, and surplus gear had been left.

³⁷ The 3rd Bde. would halt a mile behind, south of Bayonvillers.

³⁸ Lt.-Col. T. F. Ulrich, D.S.O., V.D. Bde.-Maj., 2nd Inf. Bde., 1916-17; commanded 6th Bn. 1918-19. Clerk; of Brunswick, Vic.; b. Ararat, Vic., 10 Dec. 1888.

³⁹ In platoons in artillery formation. They had started in companies in fours.

south of Bayonvillers, there to await instructions; Lieut.-Col. Mitchell ordered the 8th straight towards Harbonnières. The task of bringing up the tanks from the valley north of Warfusée was at least as hurried.⁴⁰ By about 11.30 Heane's conference was assembled. It was made clear that each battalion would attack on a two-company frontage, the other two companies following in second line. If the 8th and 7th did not lose too heavily in reaching the first objective they would go straight on and attack the second; but if the loss had been very severe the 6th and 5th would move through. The 8th and 7th were each allotted two guns of the attached British field artillery, to follow closely and attack obstacles. Seven tanks were given to each attacking battalion and were disposed generally in threes, two ahead with the third following. Col. Herrod carried the orders to the 7th at its halt;⁴¹ Col. Mitchell called his company commanders beside him and instructed them as they marched. German guns from Lihons way shelled the battalions as they moved on to the south-west of Harbonnières, but the platoons slipped between the bursts with little loss. At 1 o'clock they reached their tanks in the valley south of Harbonnières. The tank commanders asked for a line of scouts to precede the tanks and point out opposition, and at 1.20 the main body moved forward with the first line of tanks 300 yards ahead.⁴²

The 15th Brigade was quickly caught up, the fresh battalions, though noting a line of German dead near the sunken huts, having no notion of the stubborn fighting that had just ended there. The 7th and 8th were now attacked by half a dozen German aeroplanes,⁴³ and shelled from Lihons hill, but it was chiefly at the tanks that these guns aimed; and as roads and railway led towards this height the tanks tended towards it, gradually moving from the front of the 7th on to

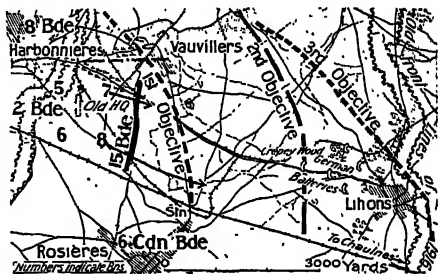
⁴⁰ The acting-commander of the 2nd Tank Bn., Maj. F. S. Laskey, in the gully at Warfusée had not received the corps order (No. 1) as to the policy of attacking in three phases, but only that (No. 2) ordering the divisions to carry out the first order. 8th Tank Bn. H.Q. had, however, received instructions for the 8th Inf. Bde.'s attack, and a map of objectives, which Laskey copied. At this juncture a car arrived to bring him to the 1st Div.'s conference at Villers-Bretonneux. Here he received orders, and hurried to Heane's headquarters for the brigade conference but found no one yet there. Heane next arriving told him to go on and get the tanks assembled. Meanwhile Maj. T. A. Crouch, by Laskey's instructions, had been bringing up the tanks to Guillaucourt.

⁴¹ Its transport had brought thus far the Lewis guns and their ammunition.

⁴² See Vol. XII, plate 519.

⁴³ Apparently only four bombs were dropped, causing slight loss.

that of the 8th. The gun-fire also caused the tanks to draw quickly ahead of the infantry, any loitering in sight of hostile gunners being fatal to them. The advance was quickest on the right flank, where the Canadians south of the railway were far ahead. Here, at 1.45, as the 8th passed through the 60th and shook out into small section columns, two tanks near the railway were hit. As the line approached Rosières station German machine-gun fire became severe. The infantry scouts informed a tank by pointing their rifles at the post from

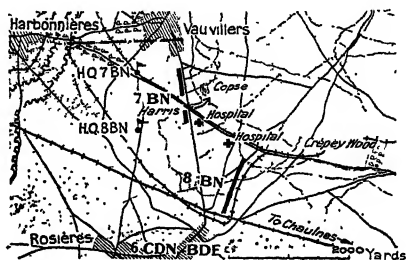


which the fire came, but heading thither the tank was hit by a shell, which burst inside and killed the crew. The right of the 8th, however, now extended into thin skirmishing lines, and advancing in small parties by short rushes, with four tanks well ahead on the left, pressed close to the enemy. The town, south of the railway, had long since been seized by the Canadians,⁴⁴ and the Germans north of the line now retired leaving the great dumps of timber and railway material near the station in Australian hands.⁴⁵ The 8th pressed on but the hill was now close ahead and two German batteries on it, one north of Crépey Wood, the other lower and on the south-west slope, hit tank after tank until five lay burning in an irregular line along the hillfoot, and others elsewhere. "It was butchery for the tanks," wrote an observer. The smoke of their burning slowly died down into thin blue wisps, for a time partly screening the distance. The German guns now turned upon the infantry and at 2.35 the right of the 8th came to a stop on a light field-railway at the foot of the hill. Rosières and the nearest Canadians were now behind the right flank; on the left the 7th was not yet up.

⁴⁴ See Vol. XII, plate 521.

⁴⁵ The main dump contained some 40,000 lengths of timber, 6,000 picks, 3,000 shovels, 3,500 rolls of wire, and much other material. Farther east was a dump of rails, sleepers, trucks and limbers, and beyond this a small timber dump. At the foundry were six old railway engines and a workshop.

The 7th had met far stronger opposition, and at 2.20, as it passed through the 15th Brigade at the lane south-west of Vauvillers,⁴⁶ there broke out a roar of small arms which some spectators thought to be supporting fire from the 15th Brigade. Actually it came from Germans rallied in the first trench of the old French Somme battle lines, close behind the main Vauvillers-Rosières road. The troops took cover and Col. Herrod, who from the upper storey of a cottage⁴⁷ could clearly see the position, ordered his left support company (under Capt. Phillips)⁴⁸ to extend to the north. Working up some old trenches near Vauvillers it soon outflanked the Germans, but their centre, in a copse,⁴⁹ held out most stubbornly. A platoon under Lieut. T. V. Harris⁵⁰ by section rushes pushed round its southern side and another around its northern. Harris then rose and led the charge. As he did so he fell mortally wounded.⁵¹ But the copse was taken. A number of Germans with machine-guns had escaped, but 15 with 4 machine-guns were captured.



It was to this point that part of the I/26th R.I.R. had fallen back, its left resting on the copse. Its regimental history states that it beat off two tanks, one being hit by a trench-mortar; and that "frightful gaps" were caused by German artillery and machine-guns among the Australians attacking here. It estimates that "70 to 80 British aeroplanes" supported the attack (certainly a great exaggeration). Apparently it was the advance past its left that caused the battalion to retire. Its commander was here wounded and, "after bitter hand to hand fighting in which wounded and prisoners were left in the enemy's hand," the remainder fell back to "Hill 91," a knoll on the Framerville-Lihons road at the north-western foot of Lihons hill.

⁴⁶ Parts of the 15th Bde. followed to the Vauvillers-Rosières highway.

⁴⁷ At the crossing of the Rosières-Vauvillers lane and Harbonnières-Lihons road.

⁴⁸ Capt. A. F. Phillips, 7th Bn. Salesman; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 1 Jan. 1892.

⁴⁹ The same that the 5th Dragoon Guards had reached on the 8th.

⁵⁰ Lt. T. V. Harris, 7th Bn. Telephone mechanic; of Bendigo, Vic.; b. Bendigo, 9 Mar. 1893. Died of wounds, 9 Aug. 1918.

⁵¹ His brother, Lt. O. J. E. Harris (who died on 4 July 1920), adjutant of the 7th, was watching with Herrod.

The 7th pushed on, its right inevitably trending south-east along the Harbonnières-Lihons road south of which lay two German hospitals. The advances during this phase strongly reminded the older soldiers of the brigade's famous attack near Krithia in Gallipoli on the 8th of May, 1915. There was the same long approach over bare, grassy plain, with a few enemy batteries bursting shells over the little columns; then the long advance, without effective covering by artillery in face of an enemy firing his hardest with rifles and machine-guns. An Australian watching the distant lines advancing up the grassy foot of Lihons hill, beyond the first trenches, wrote:

Presently we noticed these sections running . . . making this advance by section rushes . . . one section would scramble up, run thirty yards, and fling itself down. Then the next would up and do the same thing and lie down by the first. . . . While the front line kept on charging forward in its little rushes, with rifle grasped in both hands across the chest, and bayonets flashing every now and then against the darker grey or green of the hill, the second line walked very quietly. . . . We watched the brave little advance up that hill for ever so long . . . it seemed to me that at last the rushes became shorter and the numbers fewer. Where sections had consisted of seven, they now seemed to consist of five. Occasionally we saw a man coming back well this side of them, with a hand bound up or some other wound.⁵²

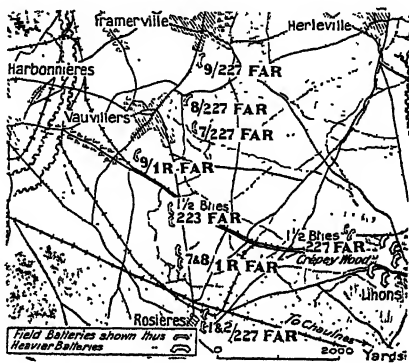
The German guns, visible on the hill ahead, blazed at the troops. Herrod had told the commander of his two field-guns (supplied by a British battery, C/189th Brigade, R.F.A.) to stay beside him ready for just such an emergency, but probably through the difficulty of keeping touch with the guns this arrangement miscarried and Herrod's messengers could not find them. Mitchell also missed his two guns at the start, but those of the 7th came up in the open near his headquarters,⁵³ and tried to silence a battery on the hill. After three shots the German battery turned on this opponent, wounded the officer, smashed one gun, and ended the attempt.

Eleven field and five heavier German batteries had been behind the 100th Div. during the previous night, posted as shown in the marginal sketch. The nine forward batteries appear to have withdrawn gradually, firing.

⁵² The history of the German 122nd I.R. (which from a hill behind Proyard watched this day the fighting south of the Roman road) says: "Almost pure infantry fights were fought out there."

⁵³ In the lane, three-quarters of a mile south of Herrod's. The observing officer of Mitchell's guns (298th Bde., R.F.A.) reached him here later.

All the tanks were out of action but the right of the 7th got through both hospitals, capturing thirty prisoners and some trench-mortars, before it was brought to a stop at 3.30 p.m. by strong resistance from a line of dugouts north of the Lihons road at the foot of the hill. The brigade had come nearly two level miles from the sunken huts but had a mile uphill to go. The 8th, south of the road, was still ahead, and the commander of its left company, Capt. Campbell,⁵⁴ now worked his men farther forward until they enfiladed the German position. Apparently it was here that a private, R. M. Beatham,⁵⁵ with one mate, W. G. Nottingham,⁵⁶ bombed and captured or killed the crews of four machine-guns that were holding up the advance.⁵⁷ The right company of the 7th had lost its commander, Capt. O'Connor, wounded, and many men, and had expended its rifle-grenades. Herrod accordingly sent up the right support company under Lieut. Fowler,⁵⁸ who took charge of both companies and, after firing a volley of rifle-grenades, charged the Germans, capturing 20 and 3 machine-guns.



Here, 1200 yards from its objective, the right of the 7th at last entered the regular trench network of 1916,⁵⁹ through which, though overgrown with grass and weeds, the troops could creep forward with fair cover. But the left was far back. After passing Vauvillers it had been fired into from Knoll 91 by

⁵⁴ Lt.-Col. A. G. Campbell, D.S.O.; 8th Bn. Mining engineer; of Sandringham, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, Vic., 4 Feb. 1889. Killed in aeroplane accident, 5 July 1936.

⁵⁵ Pte. R. M. Beatham, V.C. (No. 2742; 8th Bn.). Labourer; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Glassonby, Cumberland, Eng., 1893. Killed in action, 9 Aug. 1918. For this and later actions (*see p. 640*) he was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

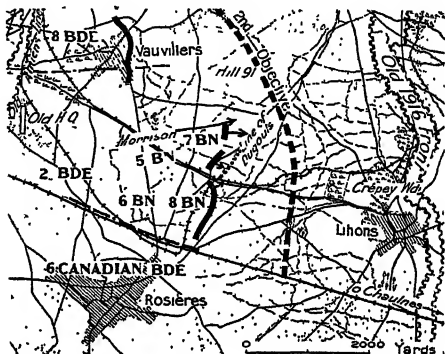
⁵⁶ L.-Cpl. W. G. Nottingham, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 3674; 8th Bn.). Labourer; of Ballarat and Malvern, Vic.; b. Ilford, Essex, Eng., 6 Nov. 1894. Died 3 Aug. 1939.

⁵⁷ Nottingham then turned two of the German machine-guns on the enemy.

⁵⁸ Capt. J. Fowler, M.C.; 7th Bn. Engineering draughtsman; of Williamstown, Vic.; b. Williamstown, 30 June 1890.

⁵⁹ Here mainly communication trenches leading to the third line which ran through Crépey Wood.

Germans whom no one was attacking, and who were therefore free to hammer with rifles and machine-guns the front and flank of the 7th. Many other Germans, driven from the front of the attack, withdrew northwards to safety and joined in the fusillade. German snipers were able to pick off the leaders. Lieuts. Purbrick⁶⁰ and Ross⁶¹ were early killed by this fire, and within a few hours fourteen officers of the 7th, including all company commanders, were hit, eight being killed or mortally wounded. The commander of the left front company of the 5th, Lieut. H. F. Morrison,⁶² pushing on to get touch with the 7th found its flank open and about 4.30 was ordered by Lieut.-Col. Luxton to guard it. By rushes he pushed half-way up the hill where his company held on though he, Lieut. Hanson,⁶³ and many others were hit, Morrison mortally.



The reason for the high cost of the fighting here was that in the ill co-ordinated planning of that day's offensive the 2nd Division, which in the second phase was to attack on the flank of the first, was given no fixed starting-time for its action. Just as General Rawlinson threw upon the commander of the Canadian Corps the responsibility for deciding the time for the day's attack, so General Monash, who had to wait upon that decision, but who divided the attack of his own corps into three stages, passed the responsibility lower down by directing that

In order to ensure that the attacks are simultaneous, close liaison is

⁶⁰ Lt. R. B. Purbrick, 7th Bn. Clerk; of Malvern, Vic.; b. East St. Kilda, Vic., 20 Apr. 1890. Killed in action, 9 Aug. 1918.

⁶¹ Lt. T. J. Ross, 7th Bn. Labourer; of Stawell, Vic.; b. Panmure, Vic., 11 Oct. 1884. Killed in action, 9 Aug. 1918.

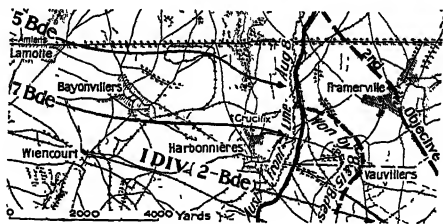
⁶² Lt. H. F. Morrison, M.C.; 5th Bn. Private secretary; of Broadford, Vic.; b. East Melbourne, 5 Dec. 1892. Died of wounds, 10 Aug. 1918.

⁶³ Lt. C. C. Hanson, M.C.; 5th Bn. Student; of Kyabram, Vic.; b. Kyabram, 30 Apr. 1895.

necessary between the 1st, 2nd, and 5th Aust. Divns. and the 2nd Canadian Divn.

The 2nd Division at 7.55 a.m. informed its brigades, then about Warfusée, that they must be assembled behind the old Amiens line by 11 a.m., ready to attack the second objective as soon as the first had been seized. It was only a four or five miles' march to the assembly area, but in this case also the orders were much too late. At 9.30 a conference of the brigadiers and others concerned was held at Villers-Bretonneux,⁶⁴ at which the plan of attack was settled—7th Brigade to attack on right, 5th on left, battalions disposed similarly to those of the 2nd Brigade.⁶⁵ There was to be no artillery barrage, the guns merely shelling important points ahead; but some Stokes mortars were taken by the 7th Brigade, their ammunition being carried on mules. The commanders of the 5th and 7th Brigades, Brig.-Genls. Martin and Wisdom, hurried to place their headquarters at a crucifix on the sunken road north-west of Harbonnières, their battalion commanders being ordered to meet them here at 11. The commander of the 20th only received this order at 11.15, and of the others Lieut.-Col. Sadler, cantering up at 11.20, found no one of his brigade yet there. The conferences were not finished till 1.30. There is no record of any message to or from the 1st Division or the Corps as to the 2nd Division's zero hour but the time now fixed—apparently as the earliest at which the battalions could reach the starting line—was 4.30 p.m.

The northernmost attacking battalion, the 18th, marching easily up the Roman road and thence south-eastwards across Morcourt valley, in which heavy German shells were bursting and a few men were hit, was in position at 3.40. Col. Sadler of the 17th wore out two horses trying to find his bat-



⁶⁴ At H.Q. of the 7th Bde. The 5th and 6th Bdes. had first been wrongly chosen for the attack—6th Bde. was corps reserve and was allotted by it to follow the 1st Div. in place of the 1st Bde. 2nd Div. H.Q. moved up from Glisy to the quarry north of Villers-Bretonneux at 11 a.m.

⁶⁵ The 7th Bde. however, kept one battalion, the 28th, in reserve.

talion, and not having done so by 4 o'clock asked the 19th, which was in position as support battalion, to take its place. Just then his companies appeared, coming from their proper rendezvous under Capt. Harnett. The company commanders were told "to take Framerville," the church being the dividing line between companies. While assembling the troops were attacked for five minutes by a "circus" of German aeroplanes, half a dozen flying low and half a dozen high above. The battalions carried on, the airmen with machine-guns and a few bombs⁶⁶ doing little harm and being presently engaged by some British "fighters." At 4.30, led by their thirteen huge tanks,⁶⁷ with a line of infantry scouts ahead, the two brigades in artillery formation crossed the Amiens line to leap-frog the 8th Brigade.

For their part even the southernmost troops of the 2nd Division never knew throughout this attack whether the 1st Division had already advanced or was still to start; actually it had moved three hours before and its flank was two miles ahead, a full mile beyond the alignment of Vauvillers, the last point at which it had been protected by the 8th Brigade's advance. Its northern flank had tended to move south-eastward, guided by roads and old trenches towards Lihons hill, and thus farther from protection. Yet the distant assembly of the 2nd Division and its tanks and their advance across the plain may have affected the enemy facing the 1st Division's flank. At all events when the 1st Division's centre, Campbell's company of the 8th and Fowler's of the 7th, worked uphill south of these Germans, and, by order of Capt. Kitchen,⁶⁸ the left centre under Lieut. Gordon⁶⁹ attacked them, the Germans facing Gordon gave way and in something like panic ran back over the hill. "We outflanked old Fritz," reported Campbell, "and got behind him." But the Victorians were too tired to give chase. They had fought for a mile and a half after a hot, dusty march of a dozen miles loaded with battle-kit, extra

⁶⁶ Harnett, in front signalling to his men, received the special attention of one airman. A British balloon, which was very far forward, was shot down—but by British fighters whose pilots mistook it for German.

⁶⁷ These were passenger-carriers (Mark V*) of the 15th Tank Bn., but were being used, for want of others, as ordinary fighting tanks. A fourteenth had broken down before the start.

⁶⁸ Capt. F. G. Kitchen, 7th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Geelong, 31 Mar. 1891. Died of wounds, 10 Aug. 1918.

⁶⁹ Lt. J. H. G. Gordon, 7th Bn. Moulder; of Footscray, Vic.; b. Moonee Ponds, Vic., 17 June 1894.

ammunition, greatcoat, waterproof sheet, and two days' rations, and had eaten only such food as they could snatch in the short interval at Bayonvillers or Harbonnières.⁷⁰ And they had lost heavily, especially in officers: in addition to those already mentioned, Lieuts. Hamblett,⁷¹ an outstanding officer, and Caddy⁷² of the 7th, and Vial⁷³ of the 8th had been killed, and Capt. Kitchen mortally wounded.⁷⁴

About this time Campbell's men by working up a trench were able to shoot some gunners at the nearer German battery. The Germans now tried to bring horse teams down to the guns and actually withdrew one, but the shooting of several horses and many men caused them to leave the others. For the time being the enemy in front of Campbell retired over the crest out of touch. On the crest, by Crépey Wood, however, a battery was still firing and the 1st Division's artillery⁷⁵ was asked to dislodge it. Meanwhile at about 5 o'clock in accordance with Kitchen's order the centre of the 7th⁷⁶ on the northern shoulder of the hill worked forward. Soon after 6 it was stopped by Germans who now began to flood from Crépey Wood into the old third French line near the crest. This line lay a quarter of a mile west of the wood and the same distance east of the right and right centre of the 7th which were precisely on the second objective. A forward observing officer of the 1st A.F.A. Brigade, Lieut. Irwin,⁷⁷ called urgently for his guns to fire on these Germans and on the guns, and for a heavier howitzer to shell the wood.

At this juncture both flanks of the 7th were exposed. On the flats to the right the flanking Canadians, who in their

⁷⁰ For a month afterwards Herrod was involved in paper warfare over the 411 "iron rations" consumed this day without authority from above.

⁷¹ Lt. J. H. Hamblett, 7th Bn. Clerk; of Richmond, Vic.; b. Liverpool, Eng., 6 Nov. 1888. Killed in action, 9 Aug. 1918.

⁷² Lt. J. Caddy, D.C.M., M.M.; 7th Bn. Farm labourer; of Abbotsford, Vic.; b. Castlemaine, Vic., 1896. Killed in action, 9 Aug. 1918.

⁷³ Lt. L. J. Vial, 8th Bn. Leather belt manufacturer; of Kew, Vic.; b. Flemington, Vic., 3 Apr. 1892. Killed in action, 9 Aug. 1918.

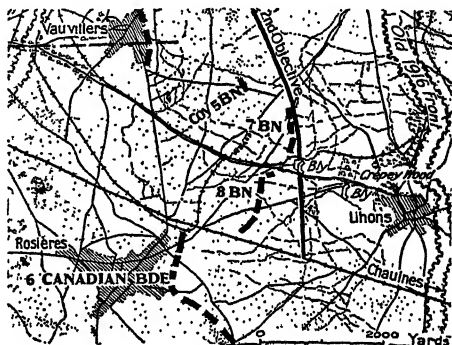
⁷⁴ In the 7th Lt. W. J. S. G. Poole (Melbourne) also was killed and Lt. F. J. Smedley (Hawthorn, Vic.) mortally wounded; Lts. J. V. Larkin, (Ballarat) and H. C. Dyer (Hawthorn, Vic.) of the 8th were killed farther back. Two company commanders of the 8th, Capt. C. L. Fox (Melbourne) and Lt. L. A. Blackman (Ballarat) were wounded—the former severely; the latter carried on.

⁷⁵ The 1st and 2nd A.F.A. Bdes. and 189th and 298th Bdes., R.F.A.

⁷⁶ Apparently under Lts. J. Fowler (Williamstown), J. H. G. Gordon (Footscray), H. J. Wright (Hawthorn), A. E. Wisewould (Melbourne) and W. E. Lane (Mooroopna).

⁷⁷ Lt. L. F. Irwin, 1st A.F.A. Bde. Architect; of Toorak, Vic.; b. Eastwood, S.A., 5 Nov. 1892.

advance had been heavily fired on by Germans from the Australian front, were now exhausted, half a mile to the right rear and could not come up. The 8th Battalion in its turn had gone half a mile beyond them, and expected to be counter-attacked. But the Australian artillery, which had galloped up to near the sunken huts and Vauvillers, and some heavy howitzers were now firing; and, the German guns on the crest being quickly withdrawn,⁷⁸ there appeared to the support battalion, the 6th, to be a chance of reaching the objective on the southern slope of the hill. Accordingly its two leading half-companies made a long advance by section rushes, eventually passing through the 8th and pressing towards the crest. But German machine-guns opened so strongly that, though Lieut. McLachlan's⁷⁹ platoon reached a German trench, it had to fall back.⁸⁰ Meanwhile reports as to the line attained had been so conflicting that at 5.15 Col. Mitchell with his intelligence officer went round it. Mitchell judged it to be on the objective, and so reported at 9.30 p.m.; actually the 8th was near the objective on the left, but nearly half a mile short of it on the right.

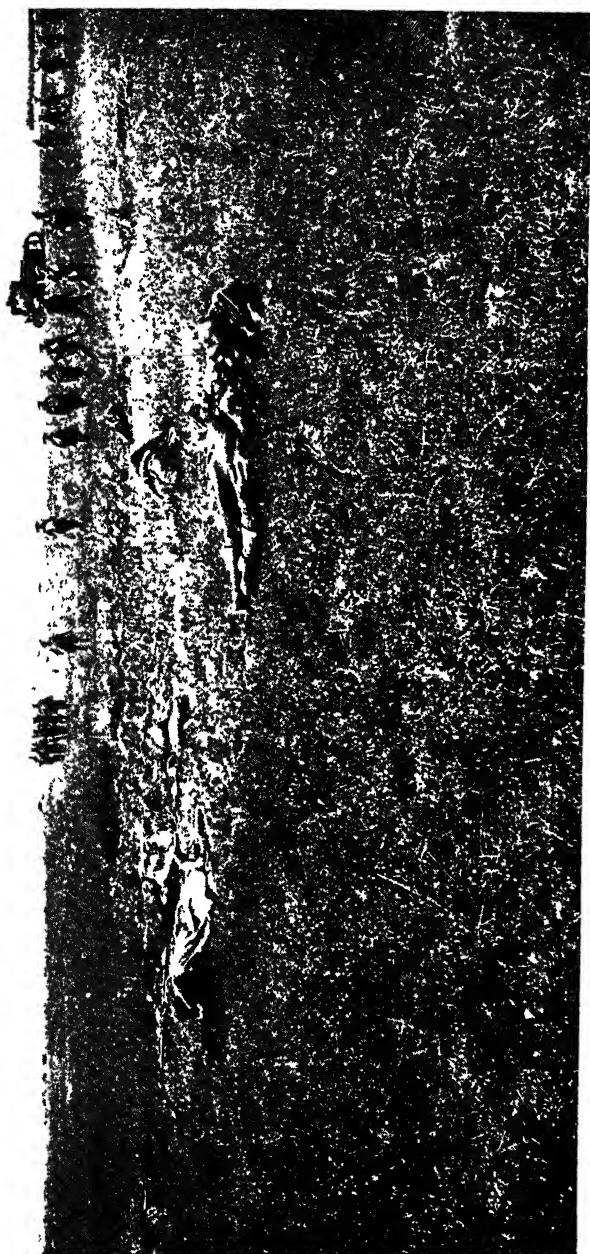


Although the attacking Victorians were yet unaware of it, they had met a powerful reinforcement. As far as the north of Rosières they had been driving back remnants of the 109th Divn. overturned by the attack of the 15th Bde. and the Canadians. But news had reached those remnants that fresh Bavarian troops were at hand. Maj. von Hymmen, commander of the 2nd Grenadier, had managed (says the regimental history) to organise resistance "for a hot twenty minutes" on the Vauvillers-Rosières road. Then Lt. Seieck (commanding the I Bn.) ordered a withdrawal to Lihons heights. In a race with "the strongly

⁷⁸ At 6.20 Maj. J. W. Sexton (Sydney), 101st Bty., reported "enemy retiring in disorder."

⁷⁹ Lt. N. McLachlan, M.C.; 6th Bn. School teacher; of Footscray and Banyan, Vic.; b. South Yan Yean, Vic., 14 May 1894. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

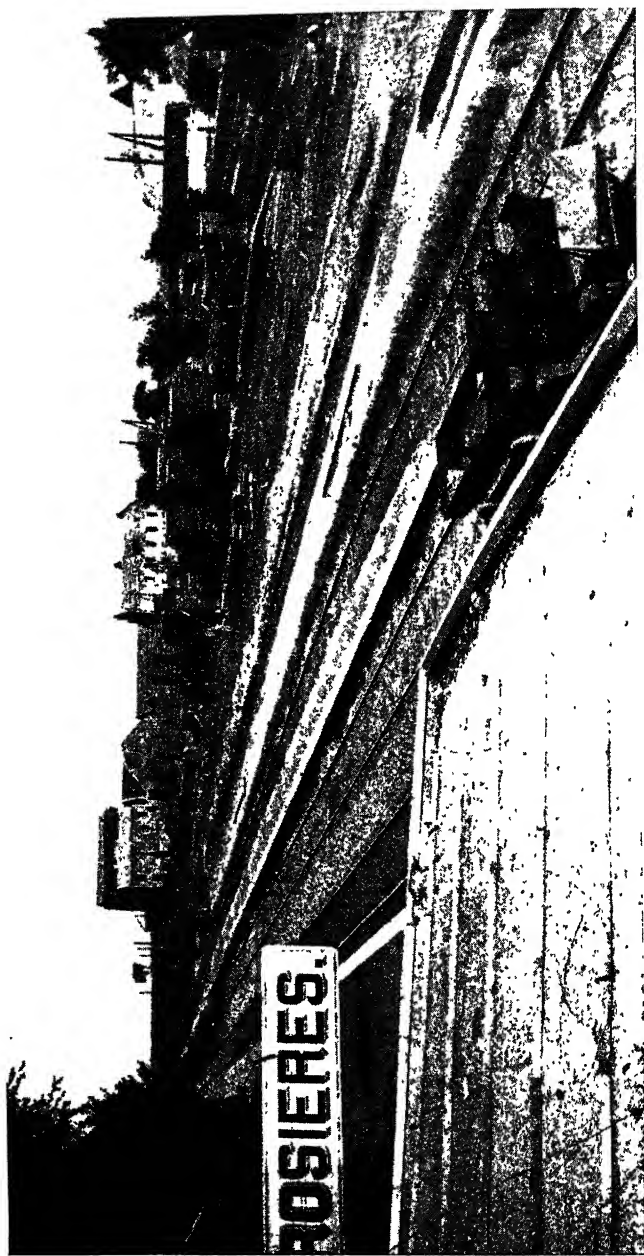
⁸⁰ On the 8th Bn.'s being held up, Pte. R. M. Beatham had again rushed a machine-gun ahead and bombed the crew. He was killed but the gun was silenced.



29. THE 1ST DIVISION GOING THROUGH, 9TH AUGUST, 1918

Anst. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E2878.

To face p 640.



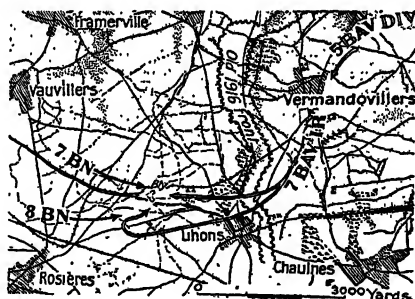
30. GERMAN DUMPS AT ROSIÈRES

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E2895.
Taken on 15th August, 1918.*

To face p 641.

thrusting enemy" they tried to take position in the old trenches farther back, "a difficult matter, as elements of the pursuers penetrated almost at the same time into this maze of trenches." Maj. Hymmen, going to hasten the Bavarians, was shot; but between 3 and 4 p.m. remnants of the 26th R.I.R. and 2nd Grenadier in the quarry on the Lihons-Harbonnières road and elsewhere found Bavarians coming through just in time as the enemy was already advancing "with great dash."

The new troops were of the 5th Bavarian Divn. from Seventeenth Army—the first of the reserves from distant sources to arrive on this part of the front. At 6.30 on the 8th Crown Prince Rupprecht had ordered up this division from Douai (as well as the 26th Res., and 119th from elsewhere); and, hurrying by rail and lorry without its artillery, after several changes in orders about 1 a.m. on the 9th it reached the ruined Vermandovillers, two miles north-west of Lihons heights. By the afternoon of Aug. 8 Crown Prince Rupprecht and von Kuhl had sufficient knowledge of the position to envisage the employment of this and other hurrying reserves in a counter-attack against the Allies' flanks. As there was not room to attack between the Ancre and Somme, the northern flank-attack would (it was hoped) be made south of the Somme by four divisions sent by Rupprecht's group—the 5th Bav., 21st, 38th, and part of the 26th Res. The southern attack would be made by divisions sent by Ludendorff (Alpine "Corps"⁸¹ and 79th Res.) and others from Eighteenth Army (82nd Res. and 221st). The 38th reached Villers-Carbonnel on the old Somme battlefield during the night, and the 21st Flaucourt, west of Péronne. Of the southern force the 79th Res. and 221st were at Bouchoir on the Roye road, and the Alpine Corps was due at Nesle (six miles behind Chaules) at 6 a.m. on the 9th. Three more divisions—the 6th Bav., 208th, and 121st were being sent by Ludendorff, but could not arrive for some days. But Rupprecht and Kuhl felt that by Aug. 9 they would have enough reserves to prevent a breakthrough though the loss of artillery was a serious matter. The newly attached artillery and part of the machine-gun companies⁸² would only come into action during the 9th and therefore the counter-attack could not take place before the 10th. Also, though the front of the Eighteenth Army was still very quiet, there were signs that it would be attacked; it was ordered to prepare to retire to its main battle-line, as much as ten kilometres back.⁸³ Crown Prince Rupprecht himself felt that, if the British advance continued, it might be wise to fall back east of the Somme.



⁸¹ This was a Bavarian division; Rupprecht specially asked for it.

⁸² The horse transport was still on the road.

⁸³ Its *grosskampfstellung*. A similar line had been envisaged by Second Army, but the project had not come to action.

The 51st Army Corps had wished to put a regiment of the 5th Bav. Divn. on Lihons hill, but Marwitz had refused, insisting that the division must be used as a whole. At 8 a.m. on the 9th, however, he acquiesced, and at 11, after a restful morning, the 7th Bavarian I.R. was sent thither. While it was on the march it was overtaken by an order to counter-attack along the road from Lihons to Rosières. The regiment's history says that at 4 p.m., after short artillery preparation, two battalions attacked, the third following a little later. On nearing Rosières they were met and stopped by cavalry and tanks, and swarms of airmen with bombs and machine-guns caused much loss. The cavalry was driven off by machine-gun fire, but the support battalion (now brought up north of the Lihons-Harbonnières road) and the centre were now attacked by "storm" detachments, "and only by the personal intervention of the regimental commander and the throwing in of his last reserve did it succeed in overcoming the crisis and throwing back the enemy. The 9th company mopped up a trench occupied by 'Englishmen' and captured two machine-guns, but was itself again struck by an enemy counter-attack" (possibly a reference to the fighting in which Beatham was killed).

Nothing was known by the 7th and 8th Battalions as to the 2nd Division's actions, and the left of the 7th was so extended that at 6 p.m. Col. Herrod asked Col. Luxton of the 5th for another company, Capt. Burke's.⁸⁴ Advancing in the direction previously taken by Morrison's, this company saw motor lorries disembarking German infantry on a road little more than a quarter of a mile ahead. Attacking by Burke's order it seized a post⁸⁵ and entered a small copse full of wooden stables. There part of the company filled the gap between Morrison's and the 7th. The German reinforcements did not attack;⁸⁶ indeed, despite anxiety on the spot, the 7th's flank was fairly secure, being supported by four well-posted machine-guns of the 2nd Company under Lieut. McKenzie.⁸⁷

The reinforcements seen were apparently part of a second regiment of the 5th Bav. Divn., the 19th B.I.R., which earlier in the afternoon had been ordered up to Crépey Wood on the hilltop, and to Lihu Farm and "Auger Wood" behind it. As the Australians succeeded in passing the line Vauvillers-Rosières, the regiment was ordered to counter-attack on the right of its sister regiment. Its history says that the I/19th, with the III/19th echeloned behind its right, "attacked with great keenness; supported by brilliant work on the part of the accom-

⁸⁴ Capt. H. Burke, M.C.; 5th Bn. Shipping clerk; of St. Kilda, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, 15 Aug. 1893. Killed in action, 23 Aug. 1918.

⁸⁵ Lt. T. S. Parker's platoon rushed the post—eight Germans, with two machine-guns, under an N.C.O. These men had just committed the vilest of military crimes—their N.C.O. lay in the trench dead, his skull cracked by a blow from behind.

⁸⁶ During the night, however, some of them wandered in and were made prisoners. One young Oxford-educated German, being told he had been captured by the 1st Aust. Div., said, "Impossible—they were up around Meteren."

⁸⁷ Lt. H. W. McKenzie, M.C.; and M.G. Coy. Wool classer; of Moonee Ponds, Vic.; b. Middle Park, Vic., 7 Sep. 1893.

panying battery, it carried its attack 1,000-1,200 metres deep, brought the English to the run, and captured an English captain and seven men. . . ." [Actually the operation was more an advance than an attack. It may have driven back some men on the 2nd Bde.'s left, though there is no Australian record of this. The "English captain" was Lt. H. C. Morrison, who was sent up at dark to take the place of his brother and wandered by mistake into the German line.] Records of the 108th Divn. say that the remnants of its right found the 19th B.I.R. behind them.

The third regiment of the 5th Bav. Divn. (21st B.I.R.) was brought up farther north to "Starry Wood," near Herleville, behind the 107th Divn.

That British airmen about 1 p.m. had seen German infantry and field-guns coming from Chaulnes into Lihons was known to the Australian staff shortly after 2.⁸⁸ Actually these were not the troops that attacked the Australians, but the message caused trouble to be anticipated. The heavy artillery shelled Lihons for an hour; and at 5.30, apparently having learned that the Canadians were stopped, General Monash ordered that, when the 2nd Division reached Framerville, a line should be established from there to Rosières. General Glasgow accordingly ordered the 2nd Brigade to stop until the Canadians advanced. But the battalions were already on part of the second objective, and their commanders believed them to be occupying the whole of it. They were accordingly ordered at 7.5 to stay there.

On the front of the 8th Battalion at sunset 100 Germans came down a communication trench and attempted to drag away by hand their three abandoned field-guns. L.-Corpl. McAvoy⁸⁹ of Campbell's company saw the movement and, placing a Lewis gunner on the right to cover him, took five men around the Germans' left⁹⁰ and, when twenty yards away, charged. Most of the Germans jumped into the trench and fled but twenty surrendered. At dusk the enemy tried again, but was driven off. Several Australians, however, were lost in the fight and Campbell ended the trouble by having the guns dragged inside his lines.

⁸⁸ An aeroplane had dropped a message to the 1st Div.'s tanks.

⁸⁹ L.-Cpl. J. McAvoy, M.M. (No. 6071; 8th Bn.). Fireman; of Ararat, Vic.; b. Jones Creek, Vic., 1893.

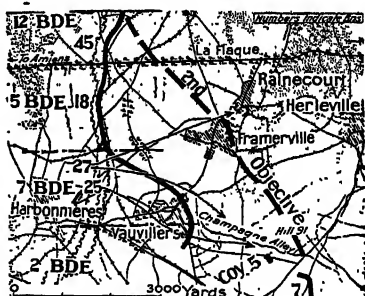
⁹⁰ Sgt. L. Mallett (Footscray), and Pte. H. Hyde (Queenscliff), 6th Bn., also with some others worked up a communication trench and dug in close beside these guns.

The night was exceedingly quiet. As the 7th had lost a third of its strength and the 8th nearly as much, their lines were very thin and two companies each of the 5th and 6th helped to hold them. For a time the wounded could not be cleared quickly enough from the aid-post, but at sunset horsed and motor ambulances came right up to it. Between 9 and 11 p.m. the limbers brought a hot meal almost to the front line. Ammunition mules were actually sent into the old trenches. About dark had come most welcome news, that a company of the 2nd Division was to the north-west of Morrison's company, though some distance away from it.

At 4.30 as the 2nd Division's tanks passed the start-line—the railway fringing the front of the old Amiens trenches—the German battery beside Crépey Wood on the Lihons crest turned on them.⁹¹ As far as

2nd Division's advance

Vauvillers the right brigade (7th) was crossing ground already taken by the 8th Brigade, and simply advanced at a fast march. The officers of attacking battalions had received hurried verbal instructions as to the objective and boundaries but some of the tank officers had no time to ascertain either. The right battalion, 25th, following its two tanks,⁹² passed south of Vauvillers, and then, like the 2nd Brigade, veered south-eastwards, its right on an old communication trench ("Champagne Alley").



Along this numbers of Germans, who earlier had been shooting at the 7th Battalion, surrendered, as did others in stables and huts below Knoll 91. Here one tank broke its crank shaft⁹³ but the other climbed the rise and the 25th dropped into an old trench-system on the slope. A heavy burst of fire pinned the infantry down, and the tank, making at the enemy, was

⁹¹ Lt. H. A. T. Ingram (Oakey, Q'land, and Newtown, N.S.W.) of the 25th was thus mortally wounded near Vauvillers.

⁹² A third had broken down near the start.

⁹³ The crew offered to go on with the infantry but was so exhausted that the offer was refused.

hit by a shell. Its crew tried to hold the ground, but, before the 25th could help, was attacked and killed by the Germans. It was then about 6 p.m. A neighbouring party of the left battalion (27th) under Capt. Bice saw the Germans retiring from this hill and farther north. But the 25th, believing its objective to have been reached, dug in and the Germans dribbled back to the position. The arrival of a wounded man of the 5th Battalion showed that the 1st Division's flank was somewhere in the neighbourhood. It was found, later, a third of a mile away.

The Germans here met were apparently remnants of the I/26th R.I.R., which had been withdrawn in fair order to this knoll in line with some of the II/2nd Grenadier and 376th I.R. on its left. The history of the Grenadier says that during the quiet of the night one post "must have seen ghosts," for it fled in sudden panic. The men had had nothing to eat for 24 hours and no sleep for two days, but leaders rallied them and led them back. The German artillery, however, shelled them and as the 376th was outflanked and withdrawn, and the Bavarian counter-attack "had failed with loss," the I/26th R.I.R. also was withdrawn to the northern end of Lihons hill into touch with the 19th B.I.R.

Like the 2nd, the 7th Brigade thought and reported that its line was on the objective, east of this rise. Actually their flanks met far to the west and south of the intended position.⁹⁴

The left battalion of the 7th Brigade, the 27th, which was to establish a line from the south-east of Framerville to a point a mile beyond Vauvillers, became spread over an immense front. While part of its right moved with the 25th along Champagne Alley, its left mistook the trees of Rainecourt and Framerville for those of Framerville and Vauvillers, and headed for the space between them, thus coming into the northern sector of the left brigade, the 5th. That brigade advanced in great spirit behind its tanks,⁹⁵ which fired with their guns into the military huts and the houses on the village outskirts. A light fringe of Germans, who during the assembly had been firing at the troops from shell-craters close beyond the Amiens line, fled as soon as the tanks appeared; and when the tanks crossed the military railways south of the Roman road, a much

⁹⁴ Touch between the flanks was most uncertain. It was here that Lt. H. C. Morrison of the 5th walked into the enemy and Lt. C. A. Auchterlonie of the 25th, trying after dark to find the 5th Bn., was killed by a shot from the tank on Knoll 91, then occupied by Germans.

⁹⁵ These had arrived from the Roman road just before the start.

stronger line of the enemy, hitherto unseen, rose from its position across the plain and retired. The German barrage also died away, the guns evidently changing position. No barrage being laid by either side, the advance went at marching pace. On the left among the big German dumps at the Roman road, Sergt. Luck⁹⁶ of the 18th saw a post firing on the tanks with a trench-mortar. With five men he crept behind it, threw a few bombs, and captured an officer and 21 other Germans and three machine-guns.⁹⁷

Framerville was held by the southern regiment (227th Res.) of the 107th Divn., the 232nd R.I.R. being north of it, astride of the road. Both were driven back. The history of the 232nd says that two companies formed a flank along the Roman road and another tried to counter-attack south of it but was stopped by machine-guns. Six German batteries north of the road tried to destroy these machine-guns, but fired short. The result was that one company commander was killed, another officer wounded, and a third captured; the counter-attacking company was practically wiped out.

But from the point reached by Luck onwards many German machine-guns north of the Roman road fired into the flank of the 18th. It had been vaguely understood that the Australians north of the road might advance covering the 2nd Division's flank, but no such move was seen.⁹⁸ The 18th kept up its pace, but officers and men were constantly hit. Close ahead on the left was now the ruined red brick factory of La Flaque. It lay beyond the objective, but fire came from there and most of the 5th Brigade's remaining tanks made towards it. From farther ahead, where the road dipped into Froissy valley, a German field-gun now hit two of the tanks.⁹⁹ To the south, near Rainecourt, a German battery ran out into full view, hit several more and, after shelling the infantry, galloped back into cover. At this stage across the front from the south came a single surviving Mark V* tank. It was commanded by a Scot, Lieut. Craig, and it hammered the factory with shell after shell. A party of Germans bolted. Craig circled the place, and,

⁹⁶ Sgt. J. J. Luck, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 2285; 18th Bn.). Coal lumper; of Miller's Point, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 1893.

⁹⁷ This officer, when captured, ordered Luck to stand to attention and salute him. Luck hit him under the chin, stood him to attention, and sent him off.

⁹⁸ It had been foreshadowed in Monash's Instruction No. 1, but No. 2 said that the division north of the road would not advance.

⁹⁹ Their crews tried to set up their Hotchkiss guns, but men from the German posts were upon them too quickly and they were captured. One man, black with oil and soot, reached the Australian line.

after returning to see that both battalions were secure on their objective, took his machine home. To avoid shell-fire Capt. Lowther's¹⁰⁰ company dug in a little short of the factory. Farther south Capt. Graham¹ and Lane with their widely scattered platoons and, among these, the left of the 27th,² had passed the Proyart-Framerville road nearly half a mile beyond their objective. A deadly machine-gun fire and sniping, from north of the Roman road and from Rainecourt close ahead, swept the open fields as they dug in. The 18th lost heavily³ and at dusk the posts were withdrawn behind the crossroad and the left of the 27th returned through Framerville to its own battalion.

Rainecourt, 1,000 yards beyond the objective, had actually been entered. The 17th Battalion, passing through Framerville and occupying the big orchard beyond, found the Germans retiring far ahead across the valley east of Rainecourt; German officers set their troops to dig in there. But Lieut. T. R. Read⁴ and a couple of men who thrust into Rainecourt did not return. Of the 27th a party under Lieut. W. Read,⁵ after consulting a passing tank, pushed on from the south-east of Framerville to the edge of Rainecourt valley and sniped northwards at the Germans lining out in it. Lieut.-Col. Chalmers and his headquarters reached this valley farther south.⁶ The objective was thus held though by very scattered troops.

In the Amiens line behind the 18th Battalion was the 20th. Capt. Portman of that battalion, going along the Roman road to see the big German dumps there, realised that the 18th's

¹⁰⁰ Capt. G. F. Lowther, D.S.O., M.C.; 18th Bn. Clerk; of Woollahra, N.S.W.; b. Woollahra, 29 June 1893.

¹ Capt. W. J. Graham, M.C.; 18th Bn. Contractor; of North Sydney; b. Randwick, N.S.W., 17 Mar. 1881. Died 2 Sep. 1930.

² Of the 27th Lts. R. G. Horwood (Broken Hill), G. S. Devonshire (Adelaide), E. G. E. Willis (Tarlee, S.A.), A. V. Fergusson (Dulwich, S.A.) R. H. Harris (Blackwood, S.A.), and H. V. Newman (Torrensview, S.A.) and their men were there; Harris and Newman were wounded.

³ Capt. Graham was wounded swinging back the flank by the Roman road. Capt. Lane was twice wounded. At 9 p.m. Lt. J. Maxwell reported that every officer of the 18th there except Capt. Lowther and Lts. A. A. Walls (Dubbo, N.S.W.), and J. J. Owen (Croydon, N.S.W.), and himself had been hit.

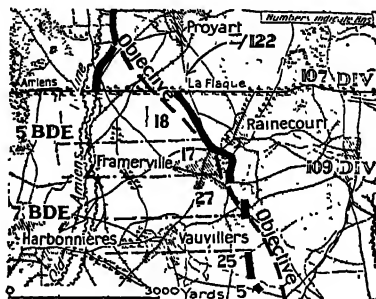
⁴ Lt. T. R. Read, 17th Bn. Librarian; of Cootamundra, N.S.W.; b. London, 16 Aug. 1881. Killed in action, 9 Aug. 1918.

⁵ Lt. W. Read, M.C., M.M.; 27th Bn. Machinist; of Rosewater, S.A.; b. Rosewater, 16 Apr. 1890.

⁶ Chalmers seeing no one near scouted across the valley. Entering a dugout there he found and captured three Germans.

flank was open, and returning to its commander, Maj. Robertson,⁷ obtained leave to place two platoons among these stores north of the road. The 45th (4th Division) being asked at nightfall to swing up its flank north of the road hurried to do so, Lieut.-Col. Johnston himself taking out two companies in face of the now disturbed hornets' nest there. By 2 a.m. a solid flank had been established; and after dark a hot meal arrived on limbers for all Australian troops in the battle line.

German records show that the sudden increase of machine-gun fire on the open flank of the 18th was due to the quick decision of Lt.-Col. Alberti of the 122nd I.R., at Proyart. From the hill east of that village he saw at once the chance offered, and although his front-line battalion, west of Proyart, wrongly reported itself about to be attacked, he threw in his only support battalion, the II/122nd, to face south and concentrate its fire on the Australians south of the road. "The fling succeeded," says the regimental historian. "The fire of almost the whole of the guns of the 2nd Machine Gun Coy. struck decisively into the surprised enemy. He stopped, wavered, fell back."



The battery that came into the open near Rainecourt was the 2/213th F.A.R. (107th Divn.) under 1st Lt. Giebler. As the Australians suspected, when the attack drove back the infantry the six batteries in the gullies south of the road were ordered by their group to withdraw. Infantry retired through them, one officer running into the gun-pits calling, "The English are on us!" Giebler ordered his guns to *advance*, jumped on an orderly's horse, galloped them up on the open spur east of Rainecourt gully, and turned two guns upon parties of the 7th Bde. advancing past Rainecourt on his left, and two on the 5th Bde. in front. The advancing troops (says the regimental history) were thus scattered and took cover or fled back.

About this time the Germans counter-attacked. Soon after the 8th A.I. Bde.'s attack the 52nd R.I.R., reserve of the 107th Divn., had been shifted up to the spur east of Rainecourt, and at 5.30, when Germans fled over that spur its right battalion advanced between the Roman road and Rainecourt. The regimental history says that the Australians fired from the hedges and houses of Rainecourt, an unexpected burst wounding one of the company commanders, while another was hit in thrusting back slightly the Australians between Rainecourt and La Flaque. Being isolated, however, the German posts withdrew to the eastern edge of Rainecourt. Remnants of the 227th

⁷ Maj. W. R. C. Robertson, M.C.; 18th Bn. Clerk; of Kogarah, N.S.W.; b. Kogarah, 13 Feb. 1891.

R.I.R., with some heavy machine-guns, and of the 41st and 109th Divns. held a line from there southward along the edge of the valley. They were short of ammunition but received a hot meal after dark.

By 8.30 p.m. General Monash knew the precise position of his front, except that the left of the 1st and right of the

**The general
advance
August 9**

2nd Divisions were believed to be on the day's objective. The Canadian Corps, which was to have advanced 6-10 miles⁸ to the line Roye-Hattencourt-Hallu was short of this by two miles on the left and five on the right. Its attack had been as ill co-ordinated as the Australian. Only the 6th Brigade, which was already in the line, was ready and advanced at 11 a.m. The 5th, hurrying into the right sector, had begun its thrust at 11.45. Next to it, the 1st Canadian Division, which at 9 o'clock warned the 2nd that it would be late, eventually attacked at 1 o'clock.⁹ In spite of this the German forces were broken through, the tanks, though most were soon hit,¹⁰ helping greatly in the first stage. Aeroplanes reported the enemy to be streaming eastwards along all roads, and in the afternoon the cavalry and some tanks were able to pass ahead and help in gaining ground on the left centre at Méharicourt and, on the right, helped by a French advance, at the Roye road. North of the Somme, despite Rawlinson's order for a vigorous continuance of the offensive, most of the day passed quietly. The difficulty was not Chipilly village but the ridge behind and the gullies north of it.¹¹ General Monash urged that he should be allowed to take over the front there and combine the efforts along the river. Chipilly was heavily bombarded at noon, 4, and 5.30 when III Corps finally launched its attack.

Late on the previous night word had reached the 4th Aus-

⁸ Keeping the 4th Cdn. Div. in reserve, and attacking with the 3rd, 1st, and 2nd and cavalry and tanks.

⁹ Its attack had been foreshadowed for, first, 10 a.m., then 11, then noon. The approach march, though pressed, took much longer than was expected.

¹⁰ The infantry tried vainly to screen them with smoke grenades.

¹¹ There were doubts whether any Germans existed in Chipilly itself. At 2.30 a.m. it was reported that the British held it; but as Lt. R. O. Samuels (Dubbo, N.S.W.), of the 1st Bn. was killed by a machine-gun firing from that direction the 1st Bn. south of the Somme sent Lt. W. M. Blake (Roseville, N.S.W.), with four men to investigate. They got into the village but saw Germans, possibly a patrol, near the church, and were fired on by a machine-gun when retiring. A British patrol also entered the village. Other visitors included the famous British war correspondent, H. W. Nevins; several Australians hunted there for souvenirs.

tralian Division that the III Corps was bringing up American troops. But from that day to this few except the Americans concerned have had any notion of the intensity of the strain and difficulty imposed on the half-trained 131st Regiment of U.S. Infantry (of which two companies had fought at Hamel) through the decision to use it in this crisis.¹² After wearying marches and more wearying delays it was on the starting-off line just in time. One of the two battalions had then and there to throw off its packs and, leaving them unguarded, hurry after the barrage, short of ammunition and rations, and only one of its companies¹³ having its Lewis guns. Orders had been passed to company commanders on the march but many platoon commanders received none.

Yet the watching Australians saw these troops sweep along the upper part of the ridge, where the British had at first advanced the day before, and enter Gressaire Wood. On the lower slope, however, the advance did not progress. The company of the 2/10th London next to the Somme could be seen still sheltering half a mile from Chipilly. At 5.50 p.m. Brig.-Genl. Mackay of the 1st Brigade ordered Maj. Mackenzie of the 1st Battalion to send across the river a patrol under a couple of N.C.O.'s who had been through Chipilly village early that morning searching for souvenirs,¹⁴ and had urged that they should be allowed to take a patrol. As the British were to attack, the request had been refused; but now the two—

¹² The story, which is fully told in Lt.-Col. Huidekoper's excellent history of the 33rd American Div. (*Vol. II, p. 410 et seq.*), is an excellent illustration of the inadvisability of using fresh, strong looking, but only half-trained troops for attack in a crisis, and forcibly recalls the throwing in of the newly arrived 18th Bn. at Hill 60, Anzac (*Vol. II, pp. 739-40*). The 131st Regt. was on Aug. 8 in the Baizieux line; and (under the arrangements between Haig and Pershing) was available for use "in any emergency." An emergency now existed, and, at 4.30 p.m. it was ordered to Heilly, to attack at dawn on the 9th. At 9 p.m. it was realised that it could not be in time. The regiment spent the night on the road and at Sailly-le-Sec, the II Bn. being without its transport and Lewis guns, and short of water and rations. At 1 p.m. Col. Sanborn was ordered to attack at 5 p.m. Later, when it was again seen that the regiment could not be in time, this was altered to 5.30. Col. Sanborn, 62 years old, himself had to lead his regiment at the run in order to get it lined out in time. The staff using the troops seems not to have realised how far "nursing" arrangements are required for inexperienced units.

¹³ That nearest the transport, which arrived during the night.

¹⁴ They had gone out unarmed across a bridge and, not being shot at, had entered Chipilly. There they picked up two German rifles and stalked a chalk pit, north of the village. It was empty except for a machine-gun, which they brought back. Hearing shouts in English as they returned, they had walked to the British post, half a mile west, and, after learning its news, returned with the information to their company commander.

Coy. Q.M.Sgt. Hayes¹⁵ and his friend Sergt. Andrews¹⁶ were told to take four men, find out what was stopping the attack, and, if possible, help it forward.

Crossing at 6 p.m., Hayes went first to the company of the 2/10th London. Its commander, Capt. Berrell,¹⁷ advised them not to go on but the village was enticing, and, after extending to twelve paces interval, the six Australians made the rush, and, though heavily fired at from the ridge north of the village, got through unscathed. Berrell now brought up half his company which, as it reached them, was fired on by a machine-gun in the valley to the north, losing some men. Meanwhile the Australians, after searching the village in two parties, worked up the spur northward and here sighted a post of Germans all intent upon their front. Ptes. Stevens¹⁸ and Turpin¹⁹ were left to guard the village entrance. Pte. Kane,²⁰ a runner, was sent to the 2/10th London to guide up a Lewis gun crew. Andrews and Pte. Fuller²¹ pushed round to the back of Chipilly spur. Hayes, after watching two German machine-guns firing in the valley, led a platoon of the British to a chalk pit on the northern outskirts. The obvious course was to take the Germans in flank, but as the platoon arrived the British guns laid a heavy barrage of smoke on this ground. The shells fell close, and the platoon was ordered back.

The smoke, however, gave the Australians their chance. Sergt. Andrews and Fuller, who had returned, took Hayes along their previous track more than half a mile around the reverse side of the spur, and there sighted, on the slope above the river, a small German post. While Andrews and Fuller covered it with their fire, Hayes worked round its flank. As he rose to rush it he found himself looking into another post

¹⁵ C.Q.M.S. J. C. Hayes, D.C.M. (No. 948; 1st Bn.). Railway employee; of Newtown, N.S.W.; b. Hay, N.S.W., 12 June 1895.

¹⁶ Lt. H. D. Andrews, D.C.M.; 1st Bn. Farmer; of Wauchope, N.S.W.; b. Rawdon Island, N.S.W., 9 Mar. 1897.

¹⁷ Capt. J. S. T. Berrell, D.S.O.; 7th Bn., London Regt. (attchd. 2/10th London Regt.).

¹⁸ Pte. G. A. Stevens, M.M. (No. 5094; 1st Bn.). Carter; of Young, N.S.W.; b. Young, 19 Mar. 1891.

¹⁹ L.-Cpl. J. R. Turpin, M.S.M. (No. 7061; 1st Bn.). Labourer; of Cootamundra, N.S.W.; b. Manilla, N.S.W., 1889.

²⁰ Pte. W. H. Kane, M.M. (No. 3845; 1st Bn.). Sleeper cutter; of Macksville, N.S.W.; b. Castlemaine, Vic., 8 Aug. 1893.

²¹ Pte. A. Fuller, M.M. (No. 7082; 1st Bn.). Tailor; of Alexandria, N.S.W.; b. Woolloomooloo, N.S.W., 18 May 1898.

of three men, one of whom fired singeing Hayes's tunic, but missed, and was at once shot by him. The others bolted but, on Andrews and Turpin running up firing, they too were captured and rushed back to the chalk pit. Telling the Londons to follow close Hayes, with Andrews, Fuller, and Kane, returned under cover of the smoke to the post previously attacked. The Germans in the second post retired, but following them, Andrews and Kane in front, and Hayes and Fuller in flank, sighted a stronger post and bore in upon it, shooting from the hip. The Germans dived into their dugouts from which, in response to a bomb, an officer and 31 men came out. Handing the prisoners to the Londons, who were now coming



up, Kane and Fuller went on and captured nine more prisoners and two machine-guns. Germans from Chipilly ridge were now retiring eastward across the Somme. Andrews set up a German machine-gun and fired at them. American troops next appeared over the backbone of Chipilly ridge and the Australians, standing up, signalled them to advance, but amid the crowd of prisoners they themselves were mistaken for enemy and fired on by Lewis guns. All took cover until the Londons came up and the Germans finally broke from the ridge above. With Andrews firing his machine-gun, Fuller and Kane took another thirty prisoners. By 10 p.m., having led the British advance the whole way, the patrol returned to its company.²² Col. Sanborn's report²³ and the British reports

²² At 9.15 Capt. Berrell gave them a rote recommending them for "their conspicuous work and magnificent bravery with me to-day." No mention, however, was made of them in the records of the 2/10th London, an omission which was the real cause of a subsequent newspaper controversy.

²³ Col. Sanborn wrote: "Further advance of this (the southern) section of the line was impossible until after dark when a British detachment mopped up the town of Chipilly, (and) captured about 300 prisoners and 1 machine-gun commander in the cemetery and his guns along the ridge."

both say that the position was taken through an outflanking movement on the south.

German records show that the defence lay on the line Morlancourt-backbone of Chipilly spur. When, after a day of expectation, the tired troops there saw the tanks assemble and then found the view shut out by smoke, some (says the history of the 124th I.R.) were seized with panic. The history of the 120th, which with other remnants helped the 479th I.R. at Gressaire Wood, says that it had to withdraw "under pressure of a hostile encircling movement on the south." (The history of the 479th supports this. That of the 202nd R.I.R., whose I Bn. together with bits of the III/137th I.R. held the spur, disagrees.) The troops were now ordered to make front along the Méaulte-Etinehem road; two battalions of the 119th I.R. (26th Res. Divn.), brought back to Bray from the composite 108th Divn. at Proyart, found remnants of the 120th (27th Divn.), 137th (108th Divn.), 478th and 479th (243rd Divn.), engineers, and others holding this line west of Etinehem.

Monash, who had a plan for forcing this line in conjunction with an advance south of the river, had now persuaded Rawlinson to hand the sector over to him. Rawlinson apparently felt that he could arrange this the more easily as Lieut.-General Butler (III Corps) was going on sick-leave arranged several days before; his position was temporarily taken by Lieut.-General Godley.

The task of reaching the line Roye-Hallu-Bray being still unfinished, General Currie at 8.30 p.m. on August 9th ordered the Canadian Corps to continue the advance on the 10th by putting through its reserves—the 4th Canadian Division (with 10th and 12th Brigades) on the left, and 32nd British Division on the right. The attack would start at 8 a.m. Monash accordingly ordered the 1st Australian Division to carry out the third phase of its attack at the same hour. As he would now command the line north of the Somme as far as the Bray-Corbie road, he himself would fix the time for advance on the northern flank.

The order to attack on the southern flank at 8 a.m. reached the 2nd and 3rd Brigades about midnight. But General Glasgow had already informed them that the advance would be continued, the 3rd Brigade, then south of Harbonnières and at the sunken huts, taking over the left half of the front. The 1st Brigade, released by the 13th from watching Chipilly, had

August
10—
Lihons

returned to the 1st Division during the night.²⁴ By 9 p.m. 2nd Brigade Headquarters had warned its troops that the advance would be made by the two support battalions, 6th and 5th, advancing from the front then held by the 8th. The front of the 7th would be handed over to the 3rd Brigade. The 3rd Brigade also attacked with two battalions, 9th (Q.) and 11th (W.A.). The 2nd Division had merely to swing up its right battalion, the 25th. The attack was to be covered by a barrage, but even at midnight, when General Glasgow's second order was sent from Villers-Bretonneux, the particulars of the barrage had not been settled.

Half of each of the battalions for the 2nd Brigade's attack was already helping the 7th and 8th to consolidate. Burke's and Morrison's companies of the 5th, in particular, could not be withdrawn without leaving wide and dangerous gaps. The support companies of the 5th, however, Maj. Hastie's and Capt. Ricketson's,²⁵ were warned at midnight and received the operation order at 3.30, and with it a set of maps showing details of the old trench-lines to be fought over. As, however, the ground of attack lay at the inner corner of four separate maps, and as these would have to be stuck together by officers who had no scissors, pins or paste, no light except candles or electric torches, and only a few minutes of time, this provision was almost useless.²⁶ No tanks were allotted—few had survived August 9th, and of these the crews were worn out.²⁷ The reserve, 13th Tank Battalion, had been given to Canadian Corps whose task was the vital one. The Australians therefore had to rely on an artillery barrage. Particulars of this arrived too late to reach the attacking companies; but the plan was to lay it down at 7.45 700 yards beyond yesterday's objective, this being as close as was considered safe. At 8 a.m.

²⁴ That night the Germans strongly shelled and also bombed from the air the roads and valleys, and while the 3rd Bn. was resting near the Roman road, with its platoons at wide intervals, sixteen bombs were dropped, one catching a headquarters party and killing the Lewis gun officer, Lt. H. H. Fergusson (Crow's Nest, N.S.W.). Captain C. F. Elliott (Walcha and Moree, N.S.W.) was wounded, and 31 others hit.

²⁵ Capt. S. Ricketson, D.C.M.; 5th Bn. Stock and share broker; of Hawksburn, Vic.; b. Malvern, Vic., 1 Aug. 1891.

²⁶ This was noted by Australian and Canadian officers of all ranks. An excellent map, comprising parts of six sheets, was issued by Aug. 12.

²⁷ Reserve crews were being sent up.

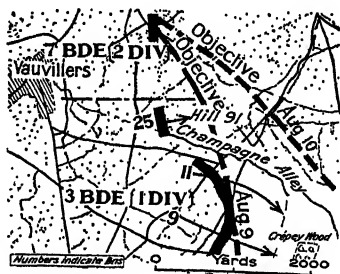
it would advance at the rate of 100 yards in two minutes to the final objective beyond Lihons.

The task of the 2nd Brigade would have been much easier if the 3rd could have taken over the left sector early in the night, releasing the 2nd Brigade's supports. But it was not till midnight that Brig.-Genl. Bennett (3rd) received the definite order to attack. The 9th and 11th Battalions, which had spent most of August 9th moving by stages up to the sunken huts and were then digging a line there, had no time to do more than get a hot meal and receive instructions, before, at 6.30, they moved off, disposed as for the attack but in artillery formation, with the 10th and 12th respectively behind them. It was daylight but movement was still screened by a morning mist. The four attack-companies of the 2nd Brigade, lying ready behind the front line, would have greatly preferred to attack in this mist, and prayed that it would last. At 7.30 Maj. Hastie and Capt. Ricketson, anxiously waiting for the 3rd Brigade, saw the 9th Battalion coming up guided by compass through the haze, its sturdy, competent commander, Lieut.-Col. Mullen, at the head and pack-mules at the rear. Mullen hurriedly arranged with them that the boundary between their brigades should be the well-marked Harbonnières-Lihons road, 400 yards south of their present position.²⁸ The 2nd Brigade troops shifted at once and were in position before 7.45. Just then the roar of an engine was heard and an aeroplane with black German crosses came over very low, and circled, a man leaning out from its side. It fired two white flares and its machine-gun chattered, some of the troops firing back with their Lewis guns at the shoulder.

This incident and the barrage, which fell at the same time, uselessly, half a mile ahead, awakened the enemy; and when the battalions advanced there broke out, with greatest fury on the left, a rattle of shots quickly growing to a roar. The fiercest fire came from the Framerville-Lihons road, which ran converging up the slope, a few hundred yards from the left flank. The 25th Battalion (2nd Division), farther north and some distance behind, had orders to attack there at 8 o'clock. Seeing

²⁸ This was the boundary laid down by divisional headquarters, but the order for it had not reached the attack-companies of the 2nd Bde.

the 11th advance at 7.45 its two attacking companies advanced then also. But they were helped by neither tanks nor artillery.²⁹ The left company was pinned down by intense fire from Knoll 91; the right, making small rushes, one or two men at a time, advanced 500 yards seizing the southern part of the knoll and the tank lost on the previous evening.³⁰ With the 25th went a platoon of the 5th. Its young officer, Lieut. Colvin,³¹ having received no other orders, called "Follow me, lads!" and was killed in the second rush. His platoon, under its sergeant, G. T. Piper,³² apparently reached the Framerville road. The 25th being short of officers, Col. Davis and his intelligence and Lewis gun officers, Lieuts. Eather³³ and Harrison,³⁴ went with the attack. Eather using a Lewis gun helped to drive the enemy step by step up Champagne Alley.³⁵ The 11th Battalion, though in sight throughout, had headed south-eastwards and advanced much farther. As even rifle-grenades were now lacking, Davis decided to send for Stokes mortars and meanwhile stopped the attack.



The 11th indeed had gone forward, but like the 7th on the previous day it made half-right, for the top of the hill, and the Germans firing at easy range into its flank inflicted terrible loss, especially among those who led the rushes across the open. Within a few minutes eleven officers had been hit, among them, as the battalion diary says, "men whom neither the

²⁹ The 7th Bde. was still being covered by the 5th Div.'s artillery, but owing to the mist and the uncertainty of the position no barrage could have been useful.

³⁰ See pp. 644-5.

³¹ Lt. J. Colvin, M.M.; 5th Bn. Hairdresser; of Fitzroy, Vic.; b. Walhalla, Vic., 9 Jan. 1897. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

³² Sgt. G. T. Piper, D.C.M. (No. 386; 5th Bn.). Plumber; of South Yarra, Vic.; b. South Yarra, 1 May 1896. Killed in action, 23 Aug. 1918.

³³ Lt. R. C. Eather, M.C., M.M.; 25th Bn. Station owner and manager; of Hughenden, Q'land; b. Goodooga, N.S.W., 18 Jan. 1888.

³⁴ Lt. W. Harrison, M.C., M.M.; 25th Bn. Painter; of Cairns, Q'land; b. Charters Towers, Q'land, 25 June 1896.

³⁵ A German officer refused to surrender and had to be shot. The 25th had 16 casualties including Lt. W. C. McCullough (Ithaca, Q'land) mortally wounded.

A.I.F. nor Australia can afford to lose." The left company (Capt. Hallahan's) lost Lieut. Sharp³⁶ killed and Lieut. Porter³⁷ wounded and was presently held up in front of the Framerville-Lihons road. The centre company (Capt. O'Neill's)—in which Lieuts. Gemmell³⁸ and Lamerton³⁹ were killed, Lieut. Clarke⁴⁰ shot through the eyes and Capt. Griffin⁴¹ in the head, and five sergeants killed or wounded—headed still farther to the right; and the right company (in which Capt. le Nay was wounded and then hit again and killed and his second-in-command, Lieut. Aitken⁴² shot through the head) eventually reached some trenches behind the junction of the two brigades, where its surviving officer, Lieut. Whitford⁴³ found touch with O'Neill's company. Between Hallahan's and O'Neill's a wide gap opened. Into this moved the support company (Lieut. Gostelow⁴⁴), which also had lost Lieut. Naylor,⁴⁵ killed. It passed a field howitzer battery abandoned on the previous evening, and entering a trench captured a number of Germans and five machine-guns. But the objective lay 800 yards beyond. The 12th Battalion was a mile in rear.⁴⁶

The 9th Battalion was to seize Crépey Wood on the centre of the summit, and then advance another mile taking Auger Wood at the north-east end and, on the south, enclosing the northern edge of Lihons. The task of the 6th and 7th (2nd Brigade) meant passing for two miles around the southern

³⁶ Lt. D. Sharp, 11th Bn. Cabinet maker; of Leederville, W.A.; b. Leith, Scotland, 10 Oct. 1890. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

³⁷ Lt. C. C. Porter, 11th Bn. Jackaroo; of Kalgoorlie, W.A.; b. St. Kilda, Vic., 14 Dec. 1894.

³⁸ Lt. G. S. Gemmell, 11th Bn. School teacher; of Claremont, W.A.; b. St. Kilda, Vic., 10 Aug. 1893. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

³⁹ Lt. G. A. Lamerton, M.C.; 11th Bn. Mechanic; of Collie, W.A.; b. Fremantle, W.A., 21 Mar. 1888. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

⁴⁰ Lt. M. E. Clarke, 11th Bn. Farm apprentice; of Bunbury, W.A.; b. Bunbury, 31 May 1894.

⁴¹ Capt. F. J. Griffin, 11th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Uddingston, Lanark, Scotland, and Perth, W.A.; b. Uddingston, 1 Feb. 1881.

⁴² Lt. J. M. Aitken, M.C.; 11th Bn. Accountant; of Kalgoorlie, W.A.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 25 Jan. 1891. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

⁴³ Lt. L. E. Whitford, M.C.; 11th Bn. Farmer; of Narrogin, W.A.; b. Yarram, Vic., 4 Sep. 1887.

⁴⁴ Capt. C. A. P. Gostelow, M.C.; 11th Bn. Accountancy student; of West Perth, W.A.; b. West Perth, 25 Apr. 1891.

⁴⁵ Lt. H. I. Naylor, 11th Bn. School teacher; of Leonora, W.A.; b. Blackwood, Vic., 1874. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

⁴⁶ It had run into the same machine-gun fire and had to advance by rushes. While leading one of these its commander, Lt.-Col. C. H. Elliott, was wounded. The men were put into old trenches. Lt. F. E. Priddey (Parkville, Vic.) also was wounded at this time; and later Lt. M. W. Blacklow (Bagdad, Tas.), mortally.

slope of Lihons hill, past three copses and the village, to the old German trenches in the shallow saddle between Lihons and Chaulnes. At about 7.48, when the three battalions were passing through the posts established on the previous evening, German machine-guns untouched by the barrage, and some also firing indirect, caught them, as did a barrage of shells laid west of Crépey Wood. The 9th, by rushes, headed straight up the slope (that is, south-east instead of east). Machine-guns on the northern end of the crest, which was not attacked, swept across the front, hitting many including Capt. Monteath and Penrose,⁴⁷ but the trench on the western edge of Crépey Wood was taken.

From the wood, a tangle of undergrowth, barbed wire, and old trenches, German posts kept up fire; but after a pause an order was given to clear it. Lieut. Gower (of Merris fame) leading one party, worked from shell-hole to shell-hole, finding and outflanking German machine-gun posts and killing or capturing the gunners. He is said to have finally rushed one machine-gun crew with only a Lewis gun rod in his hand, "bluffing" its members into surrender. While seeking the best site for a post beyond the wood, he was badly wounded, but his N.C.O.⁴⁸ took charge and a chain of posts was for a time established around the woods.⁴⁹

Both battalions of the 2nd Brigade were pressed southward by the swing of the 9th.⁵⁰ In their sector not only were the German outposts untouched by the barrage, but the right flank, brushing the Chaulnes railway around the southern foot of the hill, was faced by an unexpected difficulty. The Canadian infantry was not advancing. The two companies of the 6th as they moved sent a messenger to battalion headquarters with the news, but it had already reached Lieut.-Col. Ulrich. At 7.50 his *liaison* officer with the 12th Canadian Brigade hurried in to report that it was still at Rosières and had been ordered

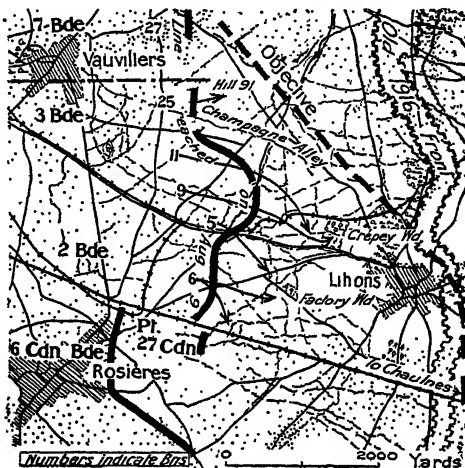
⁴⁷ Lt.-Col. W. G. Penrose, V.D.; 9th Bn. Landowner; of Grafton, N.S.W.; b. Lionsville, N.S.W., 1 Sep. 1885. (Lt. W. F. Smith—of Charters Towers, Q'land—also was killed here.)

⁴⁸ Sgt. D. H. Brown (Warwick, Q'land; died 10 Jan. 1941). Sgt. H. Hodgson (Townsville, Q'land) similarly took charge when his platoon commander was wounded.

⁴⁹ Lt. M. D. Black (Molesworth, Vic.), 11th Bn., was killed here.

⁵⁰ The 9th had four posts south of its boundary (southern edge of the wood).

not to advance pending further instructions.⁵¹ The commander of the Canadian brigade then in the line, the 6th, seeing that at 7.30 no attacking troops had arrived, ordered his left battalion (the 27th⁵²) to advance on the Australian flank. Already at 4.30 in the morning mist, on the request of Brig.-Genl. Heane, it had come up into line and indeed pushed 500 yards ahead of the Australian flank, and when the second order arrived it again swung slightly forward; but neither of these advances was seen by most of the two companies of the 6th Battalion which at 8 o'clock passed through the 8th. Their right support company lined the railway behind them, facing south.



The German fire was slight until the two attacking companies rushed a trench half-way up the southern slope.⁵³ But on passing this their line was met by an intense fusillade from Factory Wood at the hill-top. The troops then advanced by rushes, a few men at a time under mutual covering fire, and, though many were hit, held steadily on until fifty yards from

⁵¹ Not until the Canadian records were courteously made available for the writing of this history was it discovered why neither 1st Div. nor 2nd Bde. ever received notice of this sudden change of plan. The 4th Cdn. Div. depended largely on tanks for that day's success. But the 13th Tank Bn. was warned only at 12.15 a.m., and was given no information as to the position of the 4th Cdn. Div. or the plan of attack. It was 6.30 before these details were ascertained and the tanks ordered to Rosières. As they were bound to be late the 4th Cdn. Div. received permission from Gen. Currie to postpone the start, and at 6.30 addressed a telegram to warn the Australians. The address, as drafted, was "Australian Division on our flank" and someone interpreted this as "5th Aust. Div." The 5th Aust. Div., then in reserve, received the message at 7.24, and probably assumed it to have been sent (as many were) to all divisions.

⁵² On the previous evening this battalion had been put through the half-exhausted 29th.

⁵³ A Lewis gunner, Pte. J. C. Osborne (Melbourne), firing from the hip, silenced the Germans there.

the wood. On their left the 5th, whose leading platoons had been swept away in attempting to rush some buildings over the open,⁵⁴ pushed three other platoons up trenches north of the same wood and brought intense fire to bear upon it.⁵⁵ Meanwhile Lieut. Stobie⁵⁶ of the 6th, believing that delay would only increase the opposition, had gone back and brought up two support platoons to build up his flanks. Under covering fire they arrived almost without loss and the combined Lewis guns then poured intense fire into the wood. The German reply weakened and the troops rose, and with bullets from both flanks ripping the ground, rushed the place.⁵⁷ Lieuts. Maunsell⁵⁸ (5th) and Neil McLachlan (6th) were killed; but the Australian Lewis guns, of which each company here had ten,⁵⁹ were boldly used, and, though at least one German machine-gun crew fought to the last, Ricketson's company of the 5th alone captured a dozen machine-guns in as many separate fights.⁶⁰ The Victorians were enraged by their losses, and a number of prisoners were undoubtedly shot. At some huts in a clearing 50 Germans tried to escape, but most were captured as was part of a larger force in the sunken road beyond.

East and north-east of the wood lay a mile of level heath, formerly cultivated but now seamed with old grassy trenches. The 6th, after firing at the enemy till he vanished between the distant trees, moved half a mile along the Chaulnes road and up trenches towards another wood. Here it received fire

⁵⁴ Machine-gun fire came from a quarry behind these. Two officers, Lts. A. Tavener (Kew, Vic.) and A. J. Robinson (Forest Lodge, N.S.W.), were wounded here. The prisoners taken were simply disarmed and sent off without escort, it being believed that the support companies were following. Actually Morrison's and Burke's men could not get there till 10 a.m.

⁵⁵ Lts. E. P. Hitchcock (Brunswick, Vic.), and A. Aubrey (St. Kilda, Vic.) were wounded here.

⁵⁶ Capt. G. Stobie, M.C.; 6th Bn. Public accountant; of Kew, Vic.; b. Hawksburn, Vic., 9 Apr. 1892.

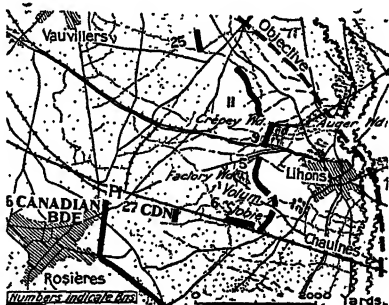
⁵⁷ L.-Cpl. N. R. Bloxsome (Melbourne) of the 5th, using a Lewis gun that he had salvaged, went across the open to this wood and helped to capture several posts. Sgt. R. Hagar (Abbotsford, Vic.), leading his platoon to outflank the position, was killed as he got there.

⁵⁸ Lt. J. W. Maunsell, 5th Bn. Clerk; of Melbourne; b. Co. Wicklow, Ireland, 4 Dec. 1889. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

⁵⁹ Two in each platoon and two with company headquarters. In this attack each company put its riflemen and four Lewis gunners in the front line, and five of the remaining Lewis guns in the second line. The tenth gun was for use against aeroplanes.

⁶⁰ With the diary of the 5th Bn. is an account (apparently by Lt. A. F. Bechervaise, of Geelong, Vic., who was prominent in the fight) giving particulars of the capture of each gun.

from undetected machine-guns to the south-east. Lieut. Stobie had with him now only 30 men and half the support company, and on his right Lieut. Rauert's company had only one officer,⁶¹ Lieut. Arnold.⁶² Part of the right support company under Coy. Q.M. Sgt. Kirby and Sergt. Franklin⁶³ was sent thither to silence machine-gun nests. Franklin, after capturing four guns, was killed, but Pte. Chard⁶⁴ took charge, and used against the enemy two of the captured guns. On the left a party of the 5th under Lieut. Volum⁶⁵ was 100 yards behind but, the left of the 5th being held up, Stobie decided to dig in. The objective here still lay over a mile ahead.



The 5th had lost heavily. Hastie and Ricketson, coming out into old trenches beyond Factory Wood to reorganise their scattered companies, found machine-guns from Crépey Wood, 300 yards north of their left flank, still sweeping their front. Col. Mullen of the 9th, whom they informed, was under the impression that Crépey Wood was Auger Wood,⁶⁶ and that the 9th had taken all but its north-east corner. Hastie and Ricketson pointed out the mistake and waited for Mullen to continue the advance.⁶⁷ But Germans were presently seen moving in Crépey Wood as if themselves assembling to attack.

The 3rd Brigade had one marked advantage in this fight:

⁶¹ Rauert and Lt. J. Barker (Northcote, Vic.) had been wounded in the advance which was uncovered on the Canadian flank, and Lt. S. A. Thomson (Preston, Vic.) had been killed.

⁶² Lt. D. Arnold, 6th Bn. Mechanical Engineer; of Melbourne; b. Walton-on-Naze, Essex, Eng., 19 May 1882.

⁶³ Sgt. L. R. Franklin, M.M. (No. 2118; 6th Bn.). Labourer; of Melbourne; b. Yarragon, Vic., 1895. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

⁶⁴ Cpl. L. G. Chard, M.M. (No. 6975; 6th Bn.). Driver; of Melbourne; b. Moonee Ponds, Vic., 1888.

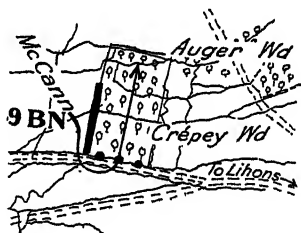
⁶⁵ Lt. W. R. Volum, 5th Bn. Pastoralist; of Murgheboluc, Vic.; b. Geelong, Vic., 15 Dec. 1890.

⁶⁶ This mistake was probably helped by the fact that the starting line had been much farther west than was then realised. Possibly Factory Wood was mistaken for Crépey Wood and the attack directed south-eastwards towards it.

⁶⁷ Their support companies (formerly Burke's and Morrison's) were just arriving, very tired.

the mules that came up that morning in rear of the 9th Battalion carried two Stokes mortars of the 3rd L.T.M. Battery with sixty rounds. They had marched widely extended⁶⁸ and during the wait for the barrage Lieut. Miles⁶⁹ took them into the old trenches ahead, a fair protection against machine-gun fire. When the barrage fell he brought them up to a trench 500 yards west of Crépey Wood, where, as machine-guns from the left were sweeping the open, he unloaded the ammunition and sent them back for more. The left being then held up by machine-guns, Sergt. McSweeney⁷⁰ was sent, with one mortar, to reconnoitre. He found the guns to be a group north of Crépey Wood. One he hit with his third shot. When he bombarded the second, many Germans fled and were mown down. Just then McSweeney was badly wounded, but Miles sent up the rest of the ammunition and a third gun was silenced. Miles then temporarily withdrew the guns and himself went round the front to discover the other obstacles to the advance.

Meanwhile the commander of the 10th Battalion, Lieut.-Col. Neligan, who was closely supporting the 9th, and had his leading companies in a trench 300 yards west of Crépey Wood,⁷¹ could see from there what Mullen from the quarry at the "Square Tower," a little farther back, could not, that the 9th was now held up at the western edge of the wood, under fire from Germans in it. Hearing from Mullen that the 9th had lost so heavily that help would be needed to clear the wood, he offered his strongest company, Capt. McCann's, 5 officers and 122 others. Mullen still believed, and told McCann, that the 9th had posts all round the wood, but



⁶⁸ Animals 50 yards apart, personnel (sergeant and 10 men) in centre.

⁶⁹ Capt. T. A. Miles, M.C.; 3rd L.T.M. Bty. Orchardist; of Hillwood, Tas.; b. Hobart, Tas., 5 Aug. 1889.

⁷⁰ Sgt. J. McSweeney, D.C.M. (No. 4054; 3rd L.T.M. Bty.). Timber hewer; of Bunbury, W. Aust.; b. Shepparton, Vic., 20 Mar. 1886.

⁷¹ In the approach Neligan marched 250 yards ahead of his battalion, on the heels of the 9th. On his back was a Lucas signalling lamp; when the 10th was to follow, he showed a red light; a yellow meant "halt and take cover." A report of the 10th says that Neligan realised that the 9th had lost direction, and therefore brought the 10th very close, so as to be able to guard either flank. Capt. W. R. Jorgensen's company of the 12th was sent up to Neligan's left as a reserve for the 11th.

from its forward officers in the trench along the western side, Maj. Ross and Capt. Armstrong, McCann learned that the only posts now remaining ahead were along the southern edge of the wood.⁷² Accordingly, taking his company thither, he sent three platoons northwards through the undergrowth. At this stage arrived an officer and 40 men of the 5th, sent to clear the wood. McCann sent on his fourth platoon and kept this party as a support line. Meanwhile, as each section of scrub was freed, Ross and Armstrong quickly posted the 9th round its eastern side. McCann formed four posts along the northern end. His platoons had lost only 15 men, and captured 10 badly wounded Germans.

The Germans who faced the attack at Lihons this day were again the two southern regiments of the 5th Bav. Divn., 19th and 7th B.I.R. During the night they had tried to redistribute their fronts into sectors which happened to be almost identical with those now held by the two Australian brigades: the 7th having been endangered by yesterday's fighting, the reserve battalion of the 19th was to relieve its right, making the Lihons-Harbonnières road the boundary between the regiments. This battalion, through a misdirection, took position north-east of Crépey Wood; later, two companies discovered the mistake, but morning found them near Lihons, still searching for someone who knew the way. A battalion of the northern regiment of the division, the 21st B.I.R., also had been sent to Lihons to drive back the Australians near Crépey Wood; but the German brigade commander, being more anxious about his southern flank, had kept this battalion at Lihons.

The night had been a most anxious one for the higher German command. Not only the remnants of the divisions broken on August 8, but also the support divisions had been largely swept away, and some of the very few reserve divisions now arriving were being placed under great strain. Ludendorff, who says that early on Aug. 8 his eyes were opened as to the true position, had sent a staff officer at once to the battlefield; and this officer's report on the condition of the troops⁷³ made a deep impression on him. At noon on the 9th he telegraphed to Crown Prince Rupprecht that, though he hoped to counter-attack west of the Somme, the staff must consider the question of retiring behind the river in order to shorten the line. He requested proposals and they were accordingly called for from the army commanders concerned. Rupprecht was already thinking of this. It is true that he and Marwitz (Second Army) had not given up the notion of counter-attacking their enemy's flanks, but divisions had had to be thrown in as they arrived, and at 4 p.m. on the 9th Rupprecht asked for leave to bring down against the Australian left two more divisions, 25th and 185th; he would not retire behind the Somme unless the

⁷² The others, finding themselves isolated and Germans filtering behind them, had fallen back.

⁷³ Naturally German regimental histories largely avoid mention of the disorganisation and panic of their own troops; but they contain many picturesque details of the demoralisation of other regiments.

reserves were too exhausted to continue the battle. But no sooner was this decision made than Marwitz, under pressure of that day's attacks, urged him to consider the retirement.⁷⁴ An hour later, at 5.25, he told Rupprecht, and afterwards the Eighteenth Army, that, lacking fresh troops, his army had temporarily lost its power of resistance; at night it would withdraw behind the Somme.

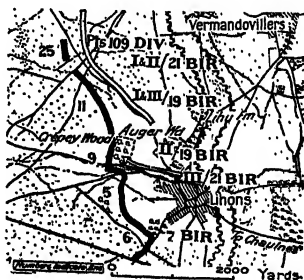
Seeing that this would have placed the Eighteenth Army in danger of being cut off, Rupprecht, whose chief-of-staff, von Kuhl, was vehemently against the move, forbade it. Later that night came the expected protest from von Hutier (commanding the Eighteenth Army) who was expecting to be attacked, and whose retirement to his "battle-line" was to be carried out that night. His right, too, he said could hold out no longer. Rupprecht informed him that Second Army had been promised reinforcement and been ordered to stand fast; and as the Canadians had taken Chilly, Hutier was permitted to withdraw his right and centre farther, to the line L'Echelle-Conchy-Ricquebourg-Matz.

The troops at Lihons were of course unaware of these fears among their leaders, and they fought well. The history of the 7th B.I.R. (which faced the 6th and 5th Bns. and part of the 9th) says that the advance was preceded by swarms of British airmen flying low, bombing and firing. On the northern flank, behind Crépey Wood, the headquarters of the regiment became involved and its commander (Lt.-Col. Kubel), was killed in counter-attacking. The right battalion was reduced to a company, and the left had to withdraw. Here one company "in keen counter-attack managed to carve out the remains of the 3rd and 4th Companies, already almost surrounded."

The two companies of the II/19th B.I.R. that were on their way to relieve the 7th's right, having at last found a guide, came suddenly into shell-fire "at about 7 a.m." and, wrongly imagining that Crépey Wood, which they were approaching, had already been taken by the Australians, lined the Framerville-Lihons road 500 yards east of it. From here later they fired into the flank of the 2nd Aust. Bde. The rest of the 19th B.I.R. was driven back by the 3rd Bde. to the same road. The I and II/21st B.I.R. farther north were still in second line with parts of the 19th Division ahead.

At 10 a.m. the German brigade commander directed that the nearest companies of the 19th should reconnoitre Crépey Wood, and, if it had been lost, recapture it. This attack, though supported by three heavy machine-guns north-east of the wood, failed with considerable loss (the regimental history mentions the Stokes mortar fire; one machine-gun was smashed).

But soon after 8 a.m. the commander of the reserve battalion of the 21st at Lihons had spontaneously pushed out a company and machine-guns to stem the Australian attack; and by about 10 a.m. these, covered

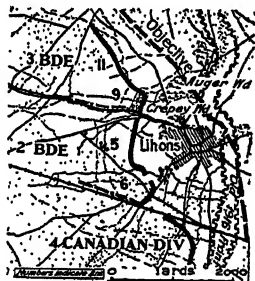


⁷⁴ The 21st Div. had reached him but only two battalions of the Alpenkorps.

by a second company and more machine-guns, had penetrated along the Lihons-Harbonnières road into Crépey Wood. German shelling drove them out, but they went in again and at noon the battalion commander, being ordered to clear the wood, reported that the great part of three companies was already in it.⁷⁵ It was these who were driven out, apparently, by McCann's attack.

On the southern flank of the 2nd Brigade at 10.30 a tank, "The Mudsplasher," had appeared from Rosières way. Its young commander, Lieut. Hall, brought it across the railway and nosed along the hedge beside the line, making for the machine-guns that had held up this flank.⁷⁶ Arnold's company sent with it a Lewis gunner, Corpl. Maroni,⁷⁷ and some men. The machine-guns were found at the little red-brick railway "Halte" at the Lihons-Méharicourt road. Hall shelled these and others and eventually cleared the front there.

Meanwhile south of the railway there advanced a line of tanks followed by the 12th Canadian Brigade.⁷⁸ They had passed the Australian flank by 11.30 and were soon ahead beyond sight. The German machine-guns on Lihons hill fired unhindered into the left of the Canadians, whose leading battalion (85th) lost its two senior officers and many men, and wheeled north-east to face the fire; the 35th went through, but could not reach its objective. The right brigade (10th), far less strongly opposed, at 12.30 seized Chilly and at 2.30 Hallu, 2,000 yards beyond the alignment of the 12th. Farther south the 32nd British Division was strongly resisted and made less progress.



The Canadians had howitzers turned upon Lihons hill⁷⁹ and the 6th was asked to advance. At about 3 o'clock Lieut. Stobie, who himself had been exploring over the ground cleared by

⁷⁵ The 19th was ordered to help the attack, but could not see it.

⁷⁶ It was at first unaware of the Australian positions and fired on both companies of the 6th, wounding Lt. Arnold. This was also the only occasion noted in Australian records on which, as sometimes inevitable in tank warfare, a man lying out wounded was run over; his feet were crushed.

⁷⁷ Cpl. P. Maroni, M.M. (served as No. 2143 P. Maroney, 6th Bn.). Labourer of Wangaratta, Vic.; b. Italy 1893. Died of wounds, 24 Aug. 1918.

⁷⁸ Nineteen tanks crossed the start-line east of Rosières at 10.15.

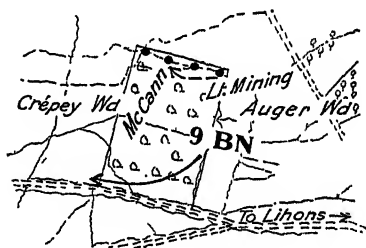
⁷⁹ Some of the shells fell short about the Australian posts.

"The Mudsplasher," summoned up his company to hold the Lihons-Méharicourt road. The right flank company followed and the two occupied the road, a quarry, and the edge of the wood there. The Canadian flank though thrown far back was still 500 yards ahead. But the 6th had expended its force in the two days' fighting. The companies were very weak, with few officers remaining,⁸⁰ and the Germans were strong in Lihons. The left was flung back towards the 5th, which itself was checked by the stoppage of the 3rd Brigade at Crépey Wood.

At 5.30 a German bombardment of Crépey Wood indicated to all spectators that it was being attacked.

The whole wood (writes an eye-witness) simply oozed with dun-coloured shell-smoke, oozing out between the trees as the soup-coloured water might ooze between a man's fingers if he gripped a dirty sponge.

An hour later it became known that a counter-attack had been defeated. When the bombardment fell McCann happened to be visiting his posts at the northern end of the wood. He saw 200-300 Germans attacking there. Some got into the wood from the east through old trenches and over the open. The posts of the 9th along the eastern edge fell back. In those of the 10th Lieuts. Younger⁸¹ and Pearce⁸² were killed.⁸³ Three Lewis guns were destroyed in the barrage and after sharp fighting the second post from the east⁸⁴ was entered. Lieut. Mining⁸⁵ in the eastern post, hear-



⁸⁰ Lts. F. R. Fischer (of Melbourne), and H. Collins (of N. Fitzroy) also were killed this day. Capt. J. D. Johnston (Caulfield) the adjutant, was sent up to Arnold's company which had no officer left, and Lt. J. S. P. Stafford (Dandenong) took command of its support company.

⁸¹ Lt. J. J. A. Younger, 10th Bn. Auctioneer; of Narracoorte, S.A.; b. Ballarooke Station, Nhill, Vic., 26 Mar. 1879. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

⁸² Lt. A. A. Pearce, 10th Bn. Clerk and area officer; of Port Pirie, S.A.; b. Port Pirie, 27 Aug. 1894. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

⁸³ As were the acting C.S.M., S. A. Dyer, (Uraidla, S.A.) and Sgt. G. C. Steer (Norwood, S.A.)

⁸⁴ Nineteen dead Germans were afterwards found in it.

⁸⁵ Lt. A. E. Mining, M.C.; 10th Bn. Bootmaker; of Melbourne; b. Gateshead-on-Tyne, Eng., 1893.

ing this fight and finding through patrols that he was isolated, managed with some men to make his way to the third post where McCann was. At no time were more than eight Australians in it, and Germans were on three sides; but the fourth post helped with cross-fire and though the Germans three times entered the position they were each time counter-attacked and driven out. After an hour the whole force gave up the attempt and withdrew. In this fighting McCann's company lost 30 men but Neligan now sent him half another company.⁸⁶ The 9th re-established its line east of the wood.

In this counter-attack a German force also advanced through some hospital huts north of Crépey and Auger Woods. But the fresh supply of Stokes mortar shells had now arrived, and Lieut. Macneil⁸⁷ with a shower of them scattered this enemy.

These attacks were a combined operation by the II/19th B.I.R., east of the wood, and the III/21st farther south, ordered by the German brigade commander about noon. A field battery was to be brought up for direct fire from near Auger Wood. At 5.30 p.m., with this battery in position, the bombardment began. After five minutes' fire (shortage of ammunition prevented more) the guns lifted for three minutes on to the middle of the wood and then placed a curtain on its western edge. The infantry attacked at 5.35 from three sides. Parts of both battalions entered the north-east corner. "But (says the history of the 21st) sharp enemy machine-gun fire soon damped the ardour; the companies fell back to their starting point." According to the history of the 19th, two of whose companies lost heavily, "the enemy opposition was so strong that a farther advance was considered impossible. . . . Aug. 10 will generally be held in sad memory by all who took part—fearful artillery fire, no visibility, many losses, no combination in carrying out orders, confusion were its characteristics. The regiment lost . . . 250 men." A line was built up, partly by stragglers one platoon of whom decamped.

On the 2nd Division's flank Col. Davis (25th) also had received his Stokes mortar ammunition and would have attacked the Germans holding him at the Camp des Chasseurs, but he was now ordered to stand fast; the attack would be made by the 26th at 4 next morning, in conjunction with one farther north. Obviously the 1st Division also would have to push to its objective and cover the Canadian flank as soon as possible.

⁸⁶ McCann used one fresh platoon in his posts and one in reserve.

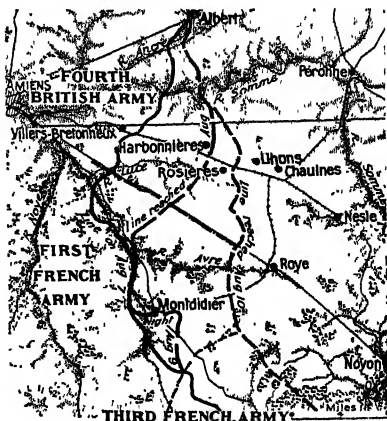
⁸⁷ He relieved Lt. Miles, who had now located the troublesome machine-guns.

At 7.15 p.m. General Monash ordered its attack to be resumed at 4 a.m. The 5th Tank Brigade would send six tanks.

The attack to be made farther north was that devised by General Monash for advance astride the Somme. A preliminary part would be an advance at dusk on the 10th by the 3rd Division (replacing the 4th) along the Roman road to Avenue Cross-road, half a mile north of Rainecourt. Then, at dawn on the 11th, the 2nd Division south of the road would advance to beyond Rainecourt and the 1st Division would capture Lihons and Auger Wood, towards which on the 10th it had made only a third of the progress intended for that day.

Haig continued to press the general attack on this fourth day, but with doubts. He expected German reserves soon to impede progress here, and was already thinking of launching instead his Third and First Armies farther north. But Foch, who visited him early on the 10th, was elated by the comparatively easy progress of the French First Army—and also of the Third, which attacked that morning. The Germans there had withdrawn six miles by order the night before, and Foch, who believed them to be demoralised, wished Haig to push straight on to the Somme north of Péronne and seize the bridge-heads. Haig, though doubting if the demoralisation was general, gave the order. At the 32nd Division's headquarters that afternoon Maj.-General Lambert⁸⁸ told him that he had stopped that day's effort owing to increasing

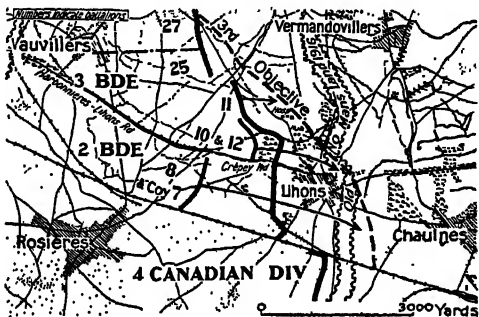
Lihons
August 11



⁸⁸ Maj.-Gen. T. S. Lambert, C.B., C.M.G., p.s.c. Commanded 69th Inf. Bde., 1916-18, 32nd Div., 1918-19. Officer of British Regular Army; b. 27 Jan. 1871. Died 20 June 1921.

resistance; his reserve brigade and all available tanks would attack on the 11th.

The Australian part in the general movement was to finish swinging up the flank for the Canadians. For this General Glasgow still used the 2nd Brigade as well as the 3rd, being determined to keep the 1st intact as reserve. Brig-Genl. Heane decided to use the 8th Battalion—four companies in line, with eight attached machine-guns—to attack on his 2,000 yards' front, supported by one company of the 7th. Being of opinion that in the old trench-lines now reached a formal attack was necessary, he arranged that the 1st Division's artillery, which supported him, should lay its initial barrage 500 yards ahead of his line, the tanks advancing five minutes earlier so as to be near it. After two minutes the



barrage would creep at a rate of 100 yards in three minutes to 700 yards beyond the objective where it would lie till 5.30.⁸⁹ Heane's arrangements were obviously very cautious. Brig-Genl. Bennett (3rd Brigade) settled his plan when Heane had finished, the tank commander⁹⁰ coming from Heane's headquarters to his. As half the 10th Battalion had already been used, he reinforced it with the 12th, of which one company would advance on its left and two in support, one remaining in reserve.⁹¹ The 11th would form the left. Bennett arranged with the British artillery supporting him for a barrage close in front of his troops.⁹² His attack was to be led by four tanks.

⁸⁹ The howitzers would bombard as long as possible the ruins of Lihons.

⁹⁰ Maj. H. V. Diamond, "A" Coy., and Tank Bn. He noted that having to work on the plans separately with each brigadier "took up considerable time."

⁹¹ Its C.O., Maj. H. A. MacPherson, (Sprent, Tas.) would act under Neligan.

⁹² The southern end of it would be thrown forward to join Heane's. The artillery order from divisional headquarters, which arrived at 2.30 a.m., provided for the barrage to be laid on the distant line, but it was then too late to inform the infantry, and so Bennett adhered to his plans.

The night was clear when at 3 a.m. the 8th Battalion, followed by Lieut. W. H. G. Smith's⁹³ company of the 7th, moved from the old second objective. By 3.55 the 8th had found the front companies of 6th and 5th and lined out in a wave of little columns with a screen in front. But nothing had been seen or heard of the 3rd Brigade or tanks. Five minutes later the barrage fell thickly—especially on Lihons which was pounded by "heavies"—but far ahead. Nearer, a line of German machine-guns rattled out. But, as all had prayed, just then a ground mist rose, thickening so quickly that it became hard for the companies to keep touch. No tank reached the 8th that day, but the advance went swiftly, the German gunners firing wildly into the fog and being easily outflanked and rushed. The left, however, after charging German posts in old trenches west of the village, found fire coming from behind its flank. Capt. Campbell had been hit but Lieut. Kennedy,⁹⁴ who had previously tried to find the 3rd Brigade, informed Lieut. Stevenson,⁹⁵ who stopped the flank while Kennedy searched north of the road for the 3rd Brigade. Meanwhile the right went slowly through Lihons, and a gap opened in the centre. Smith's company of the 7th, stumbling over old trenches, was there in place, and moved through the south of Lihons, filling the gap. Meanwhile Kennedy found the 10th Battalion advancing, and the left of the 8th went with it to its objective about the old German front line of 1916, 500 yards beyond the village.

Other parts of the 8th were disconnected through the fog. Parties of Germans had been missed; firing was heard in Lihons and shots came from the rear. Prisoners also were wandering there, lost in the fog; for the 8th was so weak that Col. Mitchell had ordered that they must be merely disarmed and sent to the rear.⁹⁶ Parties of 7th and 8th were sent back to search the ruins;⁹⁷ a tank was also sent thither by Neligan,

⁹³ Lt. W. H. G. Smith, M.C.; 7th Bn. Accountant; of North Melbourne; b. North Melbourne, 6 Apr. 1891. Died of illness, 30 Oct. 1918.

⁹⁴ Lt. D. W. Kennedy, 8th Bn. Civil engineer; of Essendon, Vic.; b. Essendon, 15 Oct. 1893.

⁹⁵ Capt. R. K. Stevenson, 8th Bn. Architect; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Malvern, 19 July 1892.

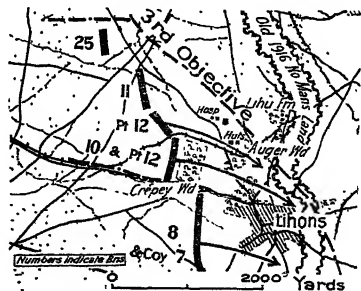
⁹⁶ This was now constantly done though seldom authorised.

⁹⁷ Lt. Kennedy sent Cpl. B. Ferri (Spotswood, Vic.) and some men. Lt. Smith similarly sent a party under Sgt. F. A. Burrows (Corowa, N.S.W.; subsequently Lt.-Col. commanding 2/13th Bn. A.I.F., 1940).

and part of the 10th Battalion as well moved through the ruins. The lost prisoners were only too glad to be redirected, and the place was cleared; but shots still arrived from the rear.

It is now certain that these came from behind the 3rd Brigade. It had started its advance, not from east of Crépey Wood but from west of it, 400 yards behind the 2nd Brigade's flank. It took the flank company of the 10th (Lieut. Scudds) twenty minutes to get through the undergrowth, and finding no troops on its southern flank it gradually extended into the 2nd Brigade's area. There were then Germans there and at first machine-gun fire stopped the advance. After sniping some of the machine-gunners the company rushed first one gun, and presently two more. Scudds now noted that all the Germans seemed to be north of him, where the attack was not yet up, and he swiftly reached his objective—the old French front. Behind him, in place, was a company of the 12th. While his men shot at Germans wandering ahead, his carrying parties arrived and delivered their loads.

The left company of the 10th also, Capt. Hurcombe's, passing through the scrub between Crépey and Auger Woods had met German machine-guns. But in the mist they shot high—some with tracer bullets—and, when the South Australians were within twenty yards, fled or surrendered. A machine-gun in the huts by Auger Wood killed several men but counter-fire poured into one hut suppressed it. The huts were full of equipment and breakfasts were on the tables. So far a light railway line had given the direction, but this was most difficult to keep; and when Hurcombe, after seeing Scudds and advancing another 200 yards, decided he was on his objective he was actually south of it. The 12th on his left, starting only just in time,⁹⁸ and heading



⁹⁸ In 1½ hours its companies had a meal to get and a mile to go.

partly through Crépey Wood, took the same direction. In both woods it met heavy but high-aimed machine-gun fire, and, in its stride, rushed twelve guns. The left support company was brought round on to the open northern flank and, after clearing some Germans from Auger Wood, settled in a trench at the southern end of Lihu Wood.⁹⁹

Though C.S.M. Keeling scouted two-thirds of a mile northwards, no Australian could be seen there. Touch was secured southwards as far as Lieut. Stevenson's company of the 8th. But when Stevenson asked Scudds and Hurcombe to help him extend further south they could not do so in view of the gap existing north of them. However, at 6 a.m. the young commander of the 8th, Lieut.-Col. Mitchell, perplexed by wild rumours of a company being cut off, started round his front with his intelligence officer. After disarming some bewildered Germans in Lihons,¹⁰⁰ Mitchell met, on the Chaulnes road, two of his company commanders trying to locate their positions. After deciding that they were on or near the objective Mitchell, by the sound of a Lewis gun, found Smith's company of the 7th¹ 400 yards to the right. Near the railway, still mopping up, he discovered his two southern companies. Later the Canadian flank was found 500 yards in rear, from which point the Canadian front ran forward east of Chilly. Mitchell reported that the 8th was on its objective.²

German records show that the right flank of the 8th Bn.'s attack had struck part of another German division, the 38th, which had reached the Chaulnes area on the 9th, and had been placed in support astride the railway covering a gap between the 5th Bav. and 119th Divns. Here its 94th I.R. had just been reached on the day before by the Canadians, and the 95th had counter-attacked them. On the morning of the 11th the 94th had one battalion on each side of the railway, with the III Bn. behind its left and the 96th I.R. behind its right in reserve.

The right of the 8th Bn. drove back one and a half battalions of the 94th. Farther north were the 7th B.I.R. (at Lihons), III/21st B.I.R. (north of Lihons and around Crépey Wood), and II/19th B.I.R.

⁹⁹ At Auger Wood three 4·2-inch guns were overrun. Lt. G. T. Gandy (Ringarooma, Tas.; died, 16 Apr. 1925) with a patrol pushed on much farther and, seeing Germans trying to move a field-gun, shot the team.

¹⁰⁰ Here were two 5·9-inch guns, with teams killed by shells.

¹ Smith thought he was at Triangular Wood near Chaulnes, and had thrown back a defensive flank.

² Actually its left was in the old French front line, its right in the old German front line. It should have been 200 yards farther forward on the left and 500 on the right. The discrepancy, however, caused no disadvantage.

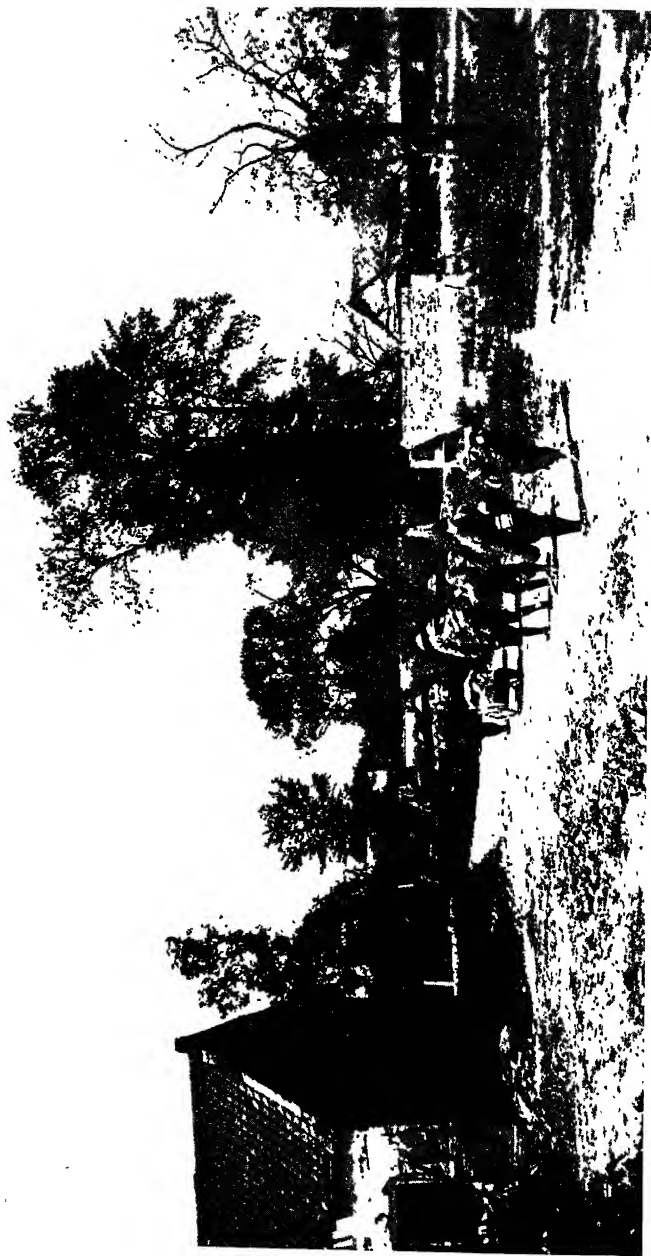


31. A POST OF THE 6TH BATTALION AFTER THE FIRST ADVANCE, 10TH AUGUST, 1918

The men are in old trenches north of the railway which lies on the right. The advance eventually ended about the line of trees.

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No. E2866.

To face p. 672



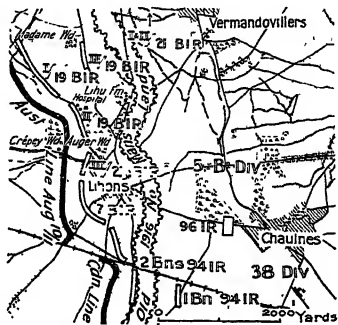
32. VAUVILLERS

The photograph was taken two days after its capture. The troops are part of the 7th Field Ambulance.

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo, No. E2916.

To face p. 673

(about the hospital). The 7th B.I.R. fell back to the saddle between Lihons and Chaulnes. Capt. Trambauer (O.C. III/21st), on the Lihons-Framerville road at Auger Wood, heard from a trusted commander of his left that it was being encircled. Trambauer ordered him to fall back on the machine-guns in rear, but officer and troops were never seen again. Next arrived Lt. Walz, from the north-eastern corner of Crépey Wood, to say that the enemy had advanced right and left "in columns of route." Then came Frierherr von Lochner from the right with similar news, only to run back and find his company gone. Trambauer went to Walz's company, in an opening in Auger Wood, intending to pick up touch to right and left from there. But Lewis gun fire now reached them "at very close range." Having no field of view in the wood, Trambauer decided to collect his troops north-east of Lihons where his accompanying battery was posted. Walz's company moved off, Trambauer and the commander of the machine-gun company being the last to leave. But Walz's company must have taken a wrong track for "with its leader it vanished."



German positions before the attack.

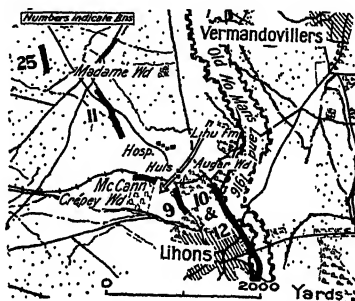
Farther north three companies of the II/19th B.I.R. were driven back across the Lihons-Framerville road but its northern company (5th) and four heavy machine-guns stopped the advance on its own front. Part of the III/19th was put in there.

By 8 a.m. it was fairly certain that the Australian brigades were on or near their objectives, though, in the fog, each part saw little of the others. In particular, nothing was clearly known of the left battalion, the 11th, whose right flank should have reached the hospital near Auger Wood. Capt. McCann in the old posts at Crépey Wood had asked three tanks, which reached him at 6 o'clock, to clear the ground north of his posts and work round Auger Wood.³ Late though they were these tanks helped to subdue the Germans on that flank. But the enemy had early information of the capture of Lihons; at 5.25 a German pilot, flying very low, saw the troops beyond it and, firing white flares, brought down an intense barrage of gas on Auger and Crépey Woods.⁴ The 12th was shelled with mustard gas at 800 yards'

³ Neligan said later that one tank went to Madame Wood.

⁴ In the 9th Bn., Maj. Ross was early hit by a shell and Lt. C. O. Thompson (Brisbane) also wounded.

range. From 8.10 to 9.30 McCann reported Germans counter-attacking from the north-east by Lihu Farm through the hospital huts and tents,⁵ and for the next three hours the front line found shots coming from the rear. Neligan, then personally moving the posts of the 9th to the south-west edge of Auger Wood, thought the fire came from Crépey Wood and ordered Jorgensen's company of the 12th to clear it, but no enemy was found there. Finally about 11, after the mist had cleared, several leaders realised what Neligan had already grasped, that between the 12th at Auger Wood and the unknown position of the 11th there must exist a gap through which Germans were filtering. Actually there was a gap of nearly a mile. In the distance Germans were seen massing on the lower ground near the ruins of Vermandovillers, beyond Lihu Farm, and 100 others now actually began to fire from old trenches in the scrub between Crépey and Auger Woods—behind the road on which the 9th was digging its new posts. Vigorous action and hard, confused fighting by McCann and others quickly cleared the ground⁶ and McCann built up a



Arrow shows German penetration

⁵ Neligan now sent him the remaining half company of the 10th. (Capt. Partridge's company was carrying.)

⁶ The details are worth telling. First, apparently, at Auger Wood Lt. E. W. L. Lines (New Town, Tas.), 12th Bn., who had just replaced Lt. L. H. B. Macleod, (Hobart), shot through the lung, saw a German retiring with five Australian prisoners. These were reaching a trench crowded with Germans near the hospital when the German escorting them was shot and the prisoners got away although German officers with revolvers urged their men to climb out and recapture them. Until this incident the Germans seemed unaware of the Australians' possession of Auger Wood. They now tried to dribble men past the flank.

Meanwhile Germans appeared behind the 9th, who first thought them to be a few missed by the 12th. The danger was noticed by others. Neligan sent up his headquarters platoon—led by his adjutant, Capt. G. C. Campbell (Adelaide), and Lt. W. McD. Perry—and the brigade mining company which hitherto had been carrying. McCann seized on fifteen men of the 9th and 10th with two Lewis guns, told Lt. F. Sharpe (Renmark, S.A.), 10th Bn., to follow with his platoon on the left, and made for the open flank near the hospital. About then thirty of the Germans behind the 9th tried to rush one of its posts. They were swept down by fire and Capt. Armstrong with Lts. R. Penman (Brisbane) and A. B. Cork (Taroom District, Q'land) and their men then charged the old trenches, Sgt. G. Walker (Townsville, Q'land) and two men capturing twenty Germans and several machine-guns. Lts. E. H. W. Meyers (Ipswich, Q'land), V. M. Chataway

front along the road north of the hospital, thus enclosing the huts and Auger Wood. On his left McCann placed a single platoon of the 11th which happened to be with him; he asked its commander to get his battalion to come up.

German records say that at 7 a.m., knowing that Lihons was lost, the commander of the 174th Bde. ordered his northern regiment (21st) to send thither a second battalion. It was ordered to retake the village from the north in conjunction with parts of the 38th Divn. attacking from the east. At the same time companies of the I and II Bns., 19th B.I.R., would again try to retake Crépey Wood. At 7.45 a.m. the II/21st, in brisk advance, reached the hill near Lihu Farm but unexpectedly found bits of copse held (says its history) by "outnumbering enemy forces,"⁷ approaching quite close. Thus forced back by machine-gun fire on the right and outflanked on the left it could not further advance, but at least took up position on the edge of the wood and tried to get touch with the 19th."

Meanwhile three companies of the II/19th, at first progressing well, reached the Framerville-Lihons road. There they lost heavily by shelling, one company commander being killed, and fell back. At this critical juncture the reserve company of the III/19th and five heavy machine-guns were thrown in and a line was established in touch with the II/21st.

On the left in the early morning assault the 11th Battalion had seized the first trench of the old French third line, but not the second, 150 yards beyond.⁸ At 6 the Germans counter-attacked but were driven off by an isolated post of seventeen men under Lieut. Evans.⁹ At 9, when the Germans came through the hospital, the 11th held on, Macneil's two trench-mortars bursting their shells among the enemy. When this enemy was cleared Macneil, now reinforced by two additional mortars under Lieut. Cooke,¹⁰ put down a light barrage on those who had been holding up the 11th, and enabled the Western

(Cleveland, Q'land) and R. G. Hamilton (Dawson district, Q'land), 9th Bn., with their platoons then cleared Auger Wood. Meanwhile McCann's party had swept the plateau up to the road south of the hospital, where the Germans, as they left, tried to burn the marquees. Lt. Sharpe offered to go through the hospital to the road beyond, which was the objective, if he was supported on his left. McCann permitted this but forbade him to go farther, and finally placed the 9th around Auger Wood, Jorgensen's company of the 12th north-east of it, and his own men and some of the 11th on the left of these. Germans still coming up from Vermandovillers were shelled and machine-gunned at long range. It was in the fighting about Auger Wood that Walz's company of the III/21st Bav. I.R. was captured. (Chataway died on 18 Oct. 1934.)

⁷ It is doubtful if the Germans actually were outnumbered here.

⁸ Col. Neligan states that only one company had received its orders.

⁹ Lt. H. L. Evans, M.C.; 11th Bn. Articled law clerk; of York, W.A.; b. York, 12 Nov. 1892.

¹⁰ Lt. C. W. Cooke, 3rd A.L.T.M. Bty. Farmer; of Largs Bay, S.A.; b. Melrose, S.A., 9 June 1890.

Australians to push their posts to the objective. The left of the 1st Division, however, was then still 600 yards south of its proper boundary. A party of twenty batmen, signallers, and pioneers from headquarters of the 11th under Lieut. Riches¹¹ tried to fill this but had six men hit immediately. Capt. Hallahan, however, now obtained a Stokes mortar¹² which at 6 p.m. shelled out the opposing posts and allowed this party also to reach the objective.

The history of the 19th B.I.R. says that at 5 p.m. its 4th and 5th Companies were attacked to the accompaniment of "very strong trench-mortar fire before which they had temporarily to give way," two of the supporting German machine-guns also falling back. Later, it is said, they reoccupied their line (evidently it lay beyond the 11th Bn.'s objective).

Round the whole of Lihons hill the Australians now held an excellent position. On the right, when the mist cleared, Col. Mitchell looked down on the waste of the old battle-field "well over the Canadians on our right beyond Chilly and forward over to Bois Triangulaire and the village of Chaulnes."

As many Germans were moving in old trenches ahead, and field-guns firing from the wood, he asked for the protective barrage, and, as it fell close ahead, he felt sure that, despite the absence of landmarks, the position reached was the objective.¹³ The fighting lulled and in the heat the tired troops dozed standing in their posts, but were awakened to drive off the enemy, who all the afternoon crept up old trenches with bombs and machine-guns, trying to counter-attack and firing flares to show his position to his artillery. With steady rifle and machine-gun fire, and occasionally with German bombs, the posts kept him out except at one point, from which, however, he was soon ejected. A strong attack was driven off at 4.30, north of the railway. Eventually the rifle ammunition of the 8th ran low and the bomb-supply was exhausted.¹⁴

¹¹ Lt. L. G. Riches, M.C.; 11th Bn. Orchardist; of Mt. Barker, W.A.; b. Broken Hill, N.S.W., 14 Nov. 1895.

¹² Under Sgt. E. V. Hockey (Broken Hill, N.S.W.). The mortars fired 550 shells this day.

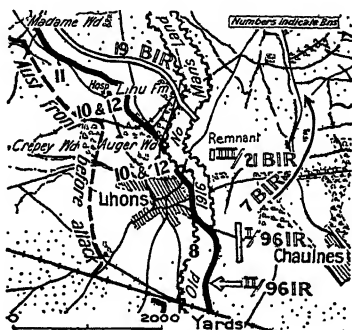
¹³ Actually it was half a mile west of the objective.

¹⁴ No forward dumps had been established; everything had to be brought from Rosières, three miles back. Headquarters troops and the band performed this duty.

These counter-attacks had been made by the reserve regiment (96th) of the 38th Divn. It had first been ordered (with the 95th) to retake Hallu and Chilly from the Canadians, but about 6.30, came news of the loss of Lihons, and it was ordered to recapture this instead. Next came another cancelling order, followed quickly by one from the corps to attack Lihons in conjunction, apparently, with part of the 21st Divn., which had reached Vermandovillers and would attack from the north. This was changed at 7.50 by an order to deploy, but not to attack until the blow from the north had some effect. At 9.8, however, the divisional commander brusquely directed it to recapture Lihons without concern for the division on the right.

The II Bn. had assembled west of Triangular (or Polygon) Wood, between Chaulnes and Lihons, with the I Bn. behind its right. A field battery was posted in the south-west corner of the wood for close support, and at 9.30 the II Bn., as ordered, advanced, two companies ahead, two following. They soon came under an accurate barrage which they believed to be directed by airmen, and were eventually stopped near the Lihons-Chilly road (the old French front line).

At 1 p.m. the attempt was renewed with artillery support, the I Bn. now also attacking on the right. At 4.30—the time (it will be remembered) of the stiffest fighting—the right was held up 300 yards from the Australians, but the II Bn. got to bombing range. The regimental history says that its penetration was, for a time, stopped by a barrage of bombs thrown by the Australians, but a German machine-gun section, thrusting to within thirty yards and, keeping their opponents' heads down, gave Res.-Lt. Kern a chance. He blew his whistle and charged but, with his C.S.M. and other leaders, was killed. On the southern flank Res.-Lt. Dittrich and some leaders by a similar rush entered the Australian trench but were never seen again. Several other officers including the commander of the I Bn. were killed, and the battalion had to withdraw 300 yards.



Early in the afternoon word had reached the 8th that the Canadians would swing across its front and attack Chaulnes. It was to conform, but no further order came and no such movement occurred.

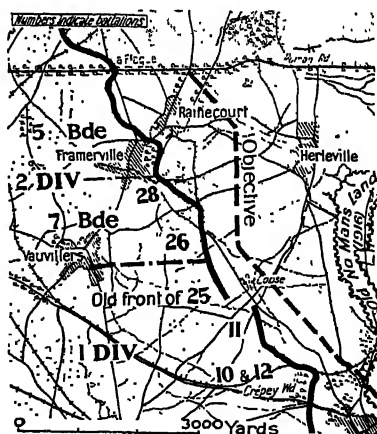
The 3rd Brigade, also, looked out on all sides over lower ground, and at 6 p.m. could see 400 Germans, apparently from Vermandovillers, assembled behind the Lihu Woods. The British barrage, called down, covered that place with smoke and dust. The German guns replied, and the up-

roar forboded another conflict. Short-falling shells caused many casualties, but no enemy came through. They had withdrawn out of touch. The night was quiet and during it the 2nd Brigade, after three days' heavy fighting, was relieved by the 1st.

From German sources it is known that about 10 p.m. the German troops on this front received an order from the IV Reserve Army Corps (which had relieved the 51st) to pass from counter-attack to defence. Farther south the Alpine Corps, helped by the 95th I.R., had retaken Hallu.

The 2nd Australian Division, on the left of the 1st, was to straighten the line to the point intended to be reached, but actually not reached, during the previous night by the 3rd Division on the Roman road. This meant an advance of two-thirds of a mile, by the left (5th) brigade to beyond Raine-court and Raine-court gully (one of the two in which the long Froissy valley ended). The right brigade (7th) was already astride of that gully and had to advance only 600-700 yards, to the ridge east of it which ran down north-west from Lihons hill. Each infantry brigade was supported by two field-artillery brigades, giving a field-gun to about every 50-60 yards, but not by tanks.

The 26th Battalion was supposed to relieve the 25th, and its starting tape was laid on the front believed to be held by that battalion. The 25th was really farther south in the 1st Division's area, and two Stokes mortar crews of the 7th Battery, which were to support the attack on a copse there, advanced alone in the fog almost into the enemy's position.¹⁵ Except for the existence of this gap on the right



¹⁵ L.-Cpl. R. Roberts (Sarn, Pwllheli, N. Wales) and Pte. W. D. Ridley (Perth, W.A.) heard voices ahead and, expecting to find their own troops, went forward and were captured. The mortars were left too close to the copse to be recovered. The copse was taken by co-operation with the 11th Bn. on the following night.

the two attacking battalions of the 7th Brigade had no difficulty.¹⁶ The strength of the 28th was so low that its three front companies went over in a single wave of two lines. The barrage was good, and in the fog the enemy's screen of light machine-guns, mostly along the road-bank close ahead of the 28th, furnished the only opposition met and was quickly overrun; 73 Germans and 18 machine-guns, were taken here. The 26th had no close fighting.

The 5th Brigade started from the Proyart-Framerville road and a line through Framerville wood, where the advanced posts of the 17th withdrew before the barrage. The right battalion, 19th, crossing the valley found the Germans withdrawing, apparently by order, and stopping at intervals to fire. On the eastern side of the valley about 100 were captured. In front of the 20th also, up near the Roman road, the German posts, after shooting till their enemy was 300 yards away, fired a white flare and then retired by stages. The right company, Lieut. Oliver's,¹⁷ passed easily through Rainecourt,¹⁸ firing from the hip at German advanced groups, and dived into the valley. Rainecourt was to have been mopped-up by the second-line company, Capt. Moore's,¹⁹ but, before he could pass the order to his officers, Moore was gassed and Lieut. Sharp,²⁰ taking command and having no orders, went on after the left company (Cameron's). At the valley, where several heavy machine-guns continued to fire till the Australians closed, Lieut. Gardiner,²¹ an outstanding leader, was sniped and Lieut. Moss²² killed by machine-gun fire. The flank temporarily halted there

¹⁶ As it started much farther east than the 5th Bde., the barrage in front of it remained stationary for fifteen minutes, allowing the 5th Bde. to come up before the 7th advanced.

¹⁷ Lt. A. H. B. Oliver, 20th Bn. Foreman carpenter; of Surry Hills, N.S.W.; b. Boggabilla, N.S.W., 1 Feb. 1886. Killed in action, 11 Aug. 1918.

¹⁸ Early on Aug. 10 the 17th Bn., suspecting that the Germans had left Rainecourt, sent a patrol under Capt. C. C. Finlay (Marrickville, N.S.W.) through the village and established three posts there. These, however, were constantly shelled by their own "heavies" and by 9.30 a.m. were withdrawn. The history of the 52nd I.R. states that at 7 that evening the 227th R.I.R. "counter-attacked" the village, using companies of the 1/52nd and "cleared it again of the enemy."

¹⁹ Capt. J. M. Moore, 20th Bn. Secretary and insurance underwriter; of Melbourne; b. Warren, N.S.W., 14 Apr. 1879.

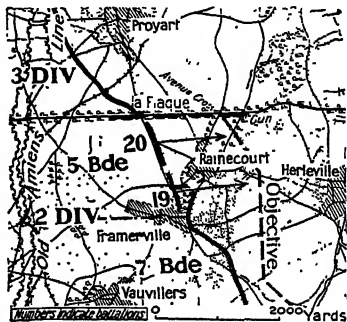
²⁰ Lt. A. H. Sharp, M.C.; 20th Bn. Orchardist; of Wyong, N.S.W.; b. Chippenham, Wilts., Eng., 25 May 1882.

²¹ Lt. J. R. G. Gardiner, 20th Bn. School teacher; of King's Plains, N.S.W.; b. Bendolba, N.S.W., 20 Mar. 1894. Killed in action, 11 Aug. 1918.

²² Lt. L. T. Moss, 20th Bn. Accountant; of N. Sydney; b. Murrumburrah, N.S.W., 2 July 1893. Killed in action, 11 Aug. 1918.

and Sergt. McNevin,²³ crossing the gully under fire, found the 19th on the far side. Sharp not knowing the objective, pushed on to the next ridge before he sighted one of the 19th's posts, which was waving him back; but moving by rushes, Sharp reached it. On learning the situation from Lieut. Jones, he settled his men in trenches on that side of the valley, from which they fired along it, enfilading Germans much farther north. Oliver was sniped while straightening his line.

The left, Capt. Cameron's company of the 20th, was fired at by machine-guns from north of the Roman road—the area that was to have been seized by the 3rd Division. As a precaution, Capt. Portman's company advanced along the road and, being shot at from the north, lined the drain south of the highway. Upon a break in the mist revealing two of the German posts, it slipped across the road into the crops, crept round them, and captured two machine-guns and 35 men. Portman "booted the prisoners off" to the 3rd Division, and then led his men beside the road, in face of a machine-gun firing down it, to the Proyard-Rainecourt cross-road. Trying to get beyond this some fifteen men were hit by the machine-gun, and the flank was therefore fixed there.²⁴ Lieut. Richardson²⁵ of Cameron's company held back his platoon on the Proyard-Rainecourt road to keep touch and a machine-gun officer established his guns near by.



When at 8 a.m. the mist lifted, the troops digging in the open fields again came under intense and deadly sniping with rifles and machine-guns from the front and from north of the road. A German machine-gun also fired from Raine-

²³ Sgt. A. N. McNevin, M.M. (No. 2755; 20th Bn.). Contractor; of Summer Hill, N.S.W.; b. Seven Hills, N.S.W., 5 Feb. 1891.

²⁴ Capt. Lowther's company of the 18th was sent to Portman, but, not being required, returned.

²⁵ Lt. G. G. Richardson, 20th Bn. Newspaper clerk; of Manly, N.S.W.; b. Canley Vale, N.S.W., 15 Jan. 1891.

court, in rear, and rifles from behind Cameron's posts. Heavy shell-fire descended on the villages, on Framerville so intensely that men guessed that the enemy was trying to destroy his abandoned transport and other gear there.²⁶ Also, from where the Roman road dipped into Froissy valley an anti-tank field-gun sniped at the 20th until Portman's company reached the crossroad and fired on the crew. All day Germans were moving there, and three times horses were brought to remove the gun but were shot down. Machine-gun fire from Proyart way made movement on the left impossible; the German snipers behind the lines eventually crept away and those in Raine-court were suppressed by the 17th.²⁷ Towards evening the fire from across the road decreased.²⁸ The brigade lost this day 8 officers and 165 men and captured 227 prisoners and 35 machine-guns.²⁹ Except on the extreme left the 2nd Division's objective had been reached, and the main German line taken; but clearly a more important position was that which now lay ahead, the Froissy-Herleville valley.

The 2nd Divn.'s attack struck the 107th Divn.—both the left of the 232nd R.I.R. astride of the Roman road and parts of the 227th and 52nd R.I.R. south of it. The 52nd, which lost 6 officers and 230 men, counter-attacked from about Herleville with two of its own companies and three of the 203rd R.I.R. (43rd Res. Divn.), but was forced to the edge of the rear (or Herleville) branch of the valley. The 232nd R.I.R. had one company captured. The commander of another, north of the road, seized this second chance of taking the 5th Bde. in flank. As the Australian left swung towards him he placed four machine-guns and a Lewis gun on the road. "I went up and down several times," he says, "and forced the reluctant men to shoot, with the result that the English stopped and dug in." This division and the 108th now became anxious about their left. The 122nd I.R. at Proyart noted that machine-gun fire from the south now came along the valley (Bayernschlucht) behind it. The 107th Divn. drew its batteries³⁰ and observation posts so far back that its infantry suffered greatly by their short-shooting. That night the main line of this division north of the Roman road was withdrawn to the Raine-court-Chuignolles road on the spur in rear of Proyart valley.

²⁶ A photograph of some of this transport is in *Vol. XII* (plate 517).

²⁷ On request of Col. Forbes (20th). The patrol found a German signaller, and a naked man, apparently insane, who had fired a machine-gun until wounded.

²⁸ Stretcher-bearers of both sides worked all the afternoon under "Red Cross" flags. One of Portman's company, Pte. H. J. H. Spies (Sydney), pushed a wheeled stretcher all day down the Roman road till blown up for the third time by a shell. Dvr. G. Humphreys (Narrabri, N.S.W.) of the 20th's transport with six mules in two trips made a dump of ammunition and bombs for his battalion near La Flaque chimney. (He died on 8 June 1927.)

²⁹ The loss of the 2nd Div.'s infantry in this fight was 13 offrs. and 268 others.

³⁰ Of the 221st F.A.R. now being reinforced by the 213th.

The Lihons operations—part of the following up of a great victory—were marked by extremely hasty planning. Their success was unduly expensive and would have been more so but for the fact that the Australian infantry at the acme of its efficiency was attacking infantry shaken by its previous attacks and not very fresh reserves. Support by artillery or tanks or both was provided in most of the operations, but the detailed arrangements for getting the artillery into useful action were deficient or neglected in the early stages of the pursuit, and impossibilities were therefore asked of the tanks, which were sent out unscreened by smoke-shell though their vulnerability to enemy field-guns was fully known.

As a result the attack often became, as the history of the 122nd I.R. notes, "pure infantry fighting." Constantly the Australian infantry had to rely solely on clever and dashing use of its own weapons (including the Stokes mortar) under conditions in which even the cleverest troops could not avoid considerable loss. The two attacking brigades of the 1st Australian Division, fresh from the height of their successes in Flanders, lost nearly 100 officers and 1,500 men in three days.

These casualties would have been much lightened and the effectiveness of the attacks increased if the operations had been even fairly well co-ordinated by Rawlinson, Monash, and Currie and their staffs. The most telling comment is that of a young officer of the 8th Battalion, who, as he limped back wounded on the night of August 10th, stopped to discuss it with an Australian from Monash's headquarters.

You know, (he said), it's such a pity that there's such a want of co-ordination in these shows. We should have liked to attack at dawn—4 o'clock or thereabout, when there was a fine mist and we could have smothered the machine-guns. There is often a mist in these mornings. Instead of that we wait till 8, when the mist has cleared and attack then. (The Canadians, he said, moved off at dawn . . . he was next to the railway himself and he saw them.)³¹ Then we moved off at 8 o'clock, without the Canadians on our flank, and get it in the neck from their flank. Then they move at 10 and go a long way beyond us and probably get it from our flank. It was just the same yesterday. First the Canadians moved off before the 1st Divvy could get there—the 5th Division went over instead. Then the 1st Division goes ahead and the 2nd Division is not up in time to start on their flank;

³¹ This was the short flank advance that few Australians saw.

and so the 7th Battalion which was on the left has an exposed flank and gets very heavily handled.³²

The chief of Rawlinson's staff, formerly Maj.-General Montgomery, said in 1929:³³

A mistake was then made and I am quite certain that the first person to admit it would have been Lord Rawlinson. . . . Our attacks on August 9th were disjointed. The real reason for this was that the Canadian Corps was allowed to fix the zero hour whereas it ought really to have been fixed by Army Headquarters. What actually happened was that everyone was so busy congratulating everyone else on their share in the victory that valuable time was lost in preparing for an advance next day.³⁴

This oversimplifies the matter. It may be that Rawlinson's conception of the original attack as static caused his subordinates to be surprised when exploitation was so quickly ordered. But when that order was received two main reasons for the lack of co-ordination were, first, that—now that open-warfare conditions had arisen—the time necessary for conferring, even by telephone, and getting orders for an attack explained and transmitted through the lower staffs to the troops, was greatly under-estimated; and, second, that the necessities for swift communication—such as provision of signal wire, which was scarce and often broken by tanks, and the advancing of headquarters and of artillery without loss of the necessary touch—were not yet sufficiently arranged for. These criticisms apply to the higher leaders more than to the brigadiers and battalion commanders rushed into half-known situations in newly captured territory.³⁵ Montgomery says:

I have no doubt that lives could have been saved and a more satisfactory advance made on the 9th if the attacks of the various divisions had been properly co-ordinated.

But the attacks made on the 10th were quite as defective.

³² The diarist adds: "I told it to Blamey [Monash's chief-of-staff] when I got back and he seemed very interested and glad to know it."

³³ Lecturing to the Royal Artillery Institute; see *R. A. Journal*, April 1929.

³⁴ He added that the 4th Cdn. Div. attacked at 4 a.m.; the 3rd went through it at noon. The 1st, next in the line, attacked at 1 p.m.; and the 2nd, next to it, at 11 a.m.

³⁵ In one case, however, that of Br.-Gen. H. E. ("Pompey") Elliott, the commander's tendency to go forward into the fighting area when he was urgently needed at his headquarters, made difficulties for the artillery and tank officers concerned.

In these respects the operations will probably furnish a classic example of how not to follow up a great attack.³⁶

³⁶ The losses of the Australian divisions (Aug. 7-14) were:

| 1st Division: | Offrs. | O.R. | 2nd Division: | Offrs. | O.R. |
|-----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------|--|-------------------------------|
| 1st Bde.: H.Q. | 1 | — | 5th Bde.: 17th Bn. | 7 | 120 |
| 1st Bn. | 3 | 64 | 18th Bn. | 14 | 171 |
| 2nd Bn. | 3 | 45 | 19th Bn. | 4 | 116 |
| 3rd Bn. | 3 | 65 | 20th Bn. | 6 | 100 |
| 4th Bn. | 3 | 20 | | | |
| | 13 | 194 | | 31 | 507 |
| 3rd Bde.: 9th Bn. | 12 | 189 | 6th Bde. 5 offrs. 51 O.R. | 2nd Div. Arty. 4 offrs. 67 O.R. | 2nd M.G. Bn. 4 offrs. 59 O.R. |
| 10th Bn. | 4 | 119 | Other units, 34 O.R. | Total 2nd Division: 75 Officers, 1,220 | Other Ranks. |
| 11th Bn. | 14 | 182 | | | |
| 12th Bn. | 8 | 74 | | | |
| 3rd L.T.M. Bty. | — | 2 | | | |
| | 38 | 566 | | | |
| Total, 1st Division | 114 | Officers, 1,817 | Other Ranks | | |
| | | | | | |
| 5th Bde.: 17th Bn. | 7 | 120 | 7th Bde.: 25th Bn. | 6 | 73 |
| 18th Bn. | 14 | 171 | 26th Bn. | 11 | 219 |
| 19th Bn. | 4 | 116 | 27th Bn. | 6 | 134 |
| 20th Bn. | 6 | 100 | 28th Bn. | 8 | 72 |
| | | | 7th L.T.M. Bty. | — | 4 |
| | 31 | 507 | | 31 | 502 |
| 6th Bde. 5 offrs. 51 O.R. | 2nd Div. Arty. 4 offrs. 67 O.R. | 2nd M.G. Bn. 4 offrs. 59 O.R. | | | |
| Other units, 34 O.R. | Total 2nd Division: 75 Officers, 1,220 | Other Ranks. | | | |
| 3rd Division: | Offrs. | O.R. | 10th Bde.: 37th Bn. | 7 | 123 |
| 9th Bde. H.Q. | 1 | — | 38th Bn. | 5 | 103 |
| 33rd Bn. | 2 | 67 | 39th Bn. | 3 | 47 |
| 34th Bn. | 4 | 82 | 40th Bn. | 2 | 84 |
| 35th Bn. | 4 | 88 | 10 L.T.M. Bty. | — | 1 |
| 9th L.T.M. Bty. | — | 4 | | 17 | 358 |
| | 11 | 241 | | | |
| 11th Bde.: 41st Bn. | 8 | 153 | 3rd Pioneer Bn. | — | 3 |
| 42nd Bn. | 6 | 81 | 3rd M.G. Bn. | 2 | 44 |
| 43rd Bn. | 1 | 40 | Artillery | 1 | 51 |
| 44th Bn. | 4 | 40 | Engineers | — | 11 |
| 11th T.M. Bty. | 2 | 5 | Signals | — | 2 |
| | | | Fld. Ambs. | — | 14 |
| | 21 | 319 | | 3 | 125 |
| Total, 3rd Division. | 52 | Officers, 1,043 | Other Ranks. | | |
| 4th Division: | Offrs. | O.R. | | | |
| 4th Bde.: 13th Bn. | 2 | 72 | 12th Bde.: 45th Bn. | 2 | 82 |
| 14th Bn. | 6 | 74 | 46th Bn. | 2 | 72 |
| 15th Bn. | 3 | 34 | 48th Bn. | 5 | 58 |
| 16th Bn. | 7 | 98 | | | |
| 4th L.T.M. Bty. | 1 | 4 | | | |
| | 19 | 282 | | | |
| | | | | | |
| 4th Pioneer Bn., 2 offrs. 20 O.R. | 4th M.G. Bn. 5 offrs. 85 O.R. | Arty. 4 offrs. 114 O.R. | Engrs. 4 offrs. 6 O.R. | Total 4th Division: 44 Officers, 740 | Other Ranks. |
| 5th Division: | Offrs. | O.R. | 15th Bde.: H.Q. | 1 | — |
| 8th Bde.: 29th Bn. | 15 | 109 | 57th Bn. | 3 | 82 |
| 30th Bn. | 5 | 50 | 58th Bn. | 4 | 102 |
| 31st Bn. | 6 | 63 | 59th Bn. | 5 | 111 |
| 32nd Bn. | 1 | 31 | 60th Bn. | 6 | 100 |
| 8th L.T.M. Bty. | 1 | 3 | 15th L.T.M. Bty. | — | 2 |
| | 28 | 256 | | 19 | 397 |
| 14th Bde. 1 offr. 15 O.R. | 5th Div. Arty. 5 offrs. 114 O.R. | 5th M.G. Bn. 22 O.R. | | | |
| Other units 1 offr. 28 O.R. | Total 5th Division. 54 Officers, 832 | Other Ranks. | | | |

CHAPTER XVI

CHIPILLY, PROYART AND ETINEHEM

THE narrative now returns to General Monash's plan for advancing on both sides of the Somme—an operation which had important consequences.

Shortly after midnight of August 9th General MacLagan of the 4th Division had been ordered to take over by 8 a.m. the front north of the river as far as the Bray-Corbie road.¹ The 13th Brigade, which that night had relieved the 1st at C  risy, was ordered to cross at Chipilly and take position behind the Americans, then holding that front. The 50th Battalion immediately did so, and the brigadier, General Herring, was summoned to MacLagan's headquarters at Corbie to confer with Monash at 11.30 a.m. At the same time Monash asked Maj.-General Gellibrand of the 3rd Division which of his brigades was available for an attack south of the river, and having especial confidence in General McNicoll, was pleased when Gellibrand replied "McNicoll's brigade," and asked Gellibrand to bring the brigadier to the conference.

At this meeting Monash explained an ingenious plan. "The German," he said, "is in a condition of great confusion, and we have only to hit him without warning and roll him up." This it was intended to do that night at two points, north of the Somme on the Bray-Corbie road and south of the river on the Roman road. He relied particularly upon the tanks.

Although tanks had never previously been used at night (he says in his *Australian Victories*²) it was thought that the effect of the noise they made would lead to the speedy collapse of the defence.

¹ He was to take over with it command of the 131st Regt., U.S. Infy., and also of parts of the 18th and 58th Divs. a mile behind the line. A hitch was caused by the III Corps ordering the 58th Div. to retain command of its troops, on the ground that they were reserves. Gen. MacLagan refused to complete the relief until the order given to him by Monash was complied with, which was done after reference to Fourth Army.

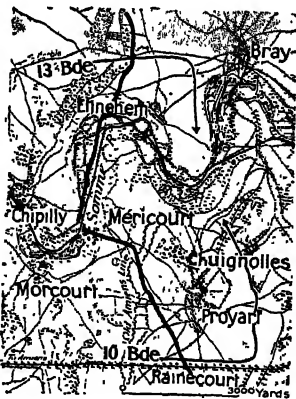
² P. 139. Tanks, however, had been used at night at Rossignol Wood.

Brig.-Genl. Herring gave instructions to the effect that the machines on the Bray-Corbie road

were only to go up and down the road and make a noise and overawe the Germans—they could fire a few grape-shot down the road on the first trip.³

The artillery would not fire that night on the front of the attack except for intermittent bursts of the heavies shelling Froissy valley and roads and bridges farther east. When the tanks with infantry following had broken through at the two points, the infantry would turn inwards behind the German outpost-line and march at right angles, south or north, to the Somme where each force would fire a green flare as signal to the other. The German line behind them would then be mopped up.

The task of the 10th Brigade (3rd Divn.) forming the southern force, was much more extensive than that of the 13th. It was to march up the Roman road with three tanks at its head, then the 37th and 38th Battalions followed by three more tanks and the 40th and 39th. Part of the 10th Machine Gun Company and all the 10th L.T.M. Battery were attached. After breaking through the German posts guarding the road, the column was to push on to Avenue Cross, three-quarters of a mile from the start, and then march northwards along the cross-road for 2,000 yards and thence another mile, mainly across country skirting Chuignolles valley, to the Somme. When its head reached the Somme the leading Battalion (37th) would halt and occupy the final mile of the line of route, the 38th halting on the sector south of it, the 40th reaching from there to the Roman road, and the 39th back along the Roman road to the old line. They would have enclosed an area of the German front $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles long and $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles deep, including



³ Quoted from an unofficial record compiled soon afterwards.

Proyart; and the new line would face Froissy valley. Meanwhile the 9th and 11th Brigades (3rd Divn.) would have relieved the 4th Division on the front held since August 8th, and they would now help in "mopping up" the enclosed area.⁴ The attention of the enemy would be diverted during these operations by several armoured cars dashing eastward along the Roman road with headlights full on, in order to give the impression that the incursion was in that direction.

The plan was Monash's and he gave instructions direct to the brigadiers, thus relieving their immediate superiors, Gellibrand and MacLagan, of responsibility for interpreting it. Gellibrand thought it feasible, but the regimental and tank officers, to whom McNicoll verbally passed the orders at a hurried conference near Cérisy, held a different view. Lieut.-Col. Knox-Knight, whose battalion, 37th, was to lead the southern column, returned from the conference looking very grave. The battalion officers (says its historian) received the orders quietly but "with some amazement." Later, as they trudged along the Roman road after the start, Knox-Knight said to the tank commander:

There'll be a train load of V.C's waiting for us when we get back, if it's a success, but we won't want them if we get through with our lives.

The tank officers "thought the job was mad."⁵ The commanders of the 9th and 11th Brigades, Generals Goddard and Cannan, who had been hurriedly informed and conferred at a headquarters in their front line, did not like the prospects. Officers of the 10th Brigade, differently from those of the 13th, did not understand that their leading tanks were to advertise their approach and scare the enemy. Only one was to go along the road, the two others advancing over the fields beside it. The leaders indeed were anxious lest the noise of the tanks on the cobbles might warn the enemy, and also feared they might be seen. The commander of the other brigade,

⁴ The 9th Bde., holding the southern half of the old front, was to clear all ground ahead of it up to the 10th Bde.'s new line. The two last battalions of the 10th Bde., thus released, would then clean up the northern part of the area in front of the 11th Bde. The 11th would clear the Méricourt peninsula.

⁵ According to a contemporary Australian record. The history of the 37th Bn. says: "Someone's confidence had overreached itself after the overwhelming success of 8th August. . . . The opinion of the front line soldier was that the enterprise was ridiculous and stupid."

Herring, asked by Monash when he would start, had chosen 9.30 p.m., intending his tanks to arrive while there was enough light for them to steer by;⁶ but Herring's brigade was to start from Gressaire Wood, which gave it a covered approach, whereas the 10th had to march across the open plateau to the Roman road. At 5.30, on going to his battle headquarters (at Hussar Farm on the Roman road), McNicoll noted a number of German balloons within sight, and was so impressed with the danger of warning the enemy that he delayed the march so that the head of the column would not reach the advanced posts at la Flaque till 10 p.m.⁷ The leading battalions, already marching across the plateau, halted for a time in such shelter as they could find. When once on the main road they were hidden by its avenue of trees.

The head of the column passed McNicoll's headquarters on the Roman road at 9.15. The tanks, six from the 8th Tank Battalion, had joined it there. Behind them, through the trees of Morcourt valley and the roadside avenue, the sunset of a beautiful summer's day was fading towards twilight. The tank officers now found that the ground beside the great road, covered with big dumps and criss-crossed by old trenches, was impossible for their machines; they particularly dreaded the chance of the half-blind crews' losing direction and firing on their infantry on the main road. Col. Knox-Knight therefore necessarily agreed that all tanks should advance up the road. Lieut. McNicol,⁸ intelligence officer of the 37th, would guide and point out Avenue Cross.

By 10 o'clock, when the head of the column passed the ruined factory at la Flaque, night had fallen, calm and clear. Lieut. McNicol with three scouts and Lieut. Jeffries,⁹ commander of the leading tank, went first, having calculated the number of paces they must take before reaching the turning point and looking out for a clump of bushes known to mark

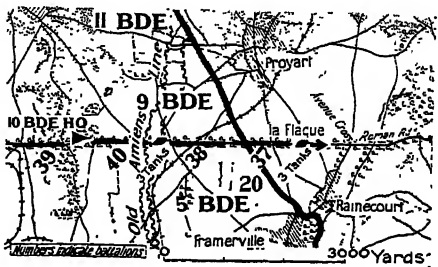
⁶ Herring, whose brigade was tired, having spent the previous night marching up and relieving the 1st, wanted the attack postponed till the night of the 11th, but Monash could not permit this.

⁷ McNicoll notified Gen. Gellibrand of this change. As 9.30 was the hour fixed also for the 13th Bde. and for the 20th Bn. (2nd Div.), of which Capt. Portman's company was to connect with the 3rd Div., Gellibrand countermanded the change. His order, however, reached McNicoll too late to be acted on.

⁸ Lt. N. G. McNicol, M.C.; 37th Bn. School teacher; of Gordon and Caulfield, Vic.; b. Wannon, Vic., 21 Apr. 1890.

⁹ Lt. S. S. Jeffries; 8th Tank Bn. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

the cross-roads. German fire was not met as soon as expected; in silence, except for the clangour of the tanks, the column moved, scouts and three tanks in file ahead; then a gap of twenty-five yards in which walked Lieut.-Col. Knox-Knight and Capt. Hickey¹⁰ (Tanks); next the leading company of the 37th in single file, platoon after platoon at 100 yards' intervals, with one platoon under Lieut. Smith¹¹ north of the road as flank guard. The rear battalions were in fours, the last, 39th, two miles back at Morcourt valley. Ahead waited Portman's company of the 20th, which, expecting the column to start at 9.30, had crept out by daylight along the ditch south of the road. Portman heard "a



whirring"—the only evidence of the march until it neared and passed. German flares occasionally rose ahead, and the guides, when nearly half a mile beyond la Flaque, could see the cluster of trees at the cross-road. Just then an aeroplane was heard approaching, low over the road. There came the "downward whizz" of a bomb:¹² a flash, a crash, and the unditching beam of a tank revolved in the air and fell to earth. The aeroplane flew on, dropping bombs along the main road. As its sound, which had probably screened that of the tanks, faded, one German machine-gun and then another opened, and flares rose thickly. The Australian guides took shelter, as if from rain, by dodging behind the leading tank and crouching as they walked between its caterpillars. The infantry hopped into the ditch on the southern side of the road and advanced along it. In the flare-light Germans could be seen running from the road,

¹⁰ Capt. D. E. Hickey; The Suffolk Regt. and 8th Tank Bn. Student; of Hampstead, Eng.; b. Ardrouge, Buenos Aires, 24 Mar. 1895.

¹¹ Lt. R. J. Smith, M.C.; 37th Bn. Farmer; of Epping, Vic.; b. Epping, 21 May 1890.

¹² See an account by Capt. Hickey in the *Royal Tank Corps Journal* quoted in *Reveille* 1 Nov. 1933. Capt. Hickey, who, with Knox-Knight, was behind the third tank, thought this was hit by an air bomb. Cpl. J. G. H. Gornall (Essex, Eng. and Brighton Beach, Vic.), 37th Bn., who was close behind, thought it had run over a road mine. Lt. H. W. Humphreys of the second tank afterwards told Hickey that his tank had been hit.

and the guides fired on them. Machine-gun bullets now rained in torrents, sparkling on the cobbles and outlining the tanks with a continuous glow. Most fire came, probably, from ahead but many machine-guns opened from the houses of Proyard, 1,000 yards to the north, and others presently from Rainecourt to the south, and others finally from the west.¹³ An anti-tank field-gun also fired down the road but, in the dark, inaccurately. For a considerable time the advance went on, the infantry crouching, and making rushes.

Finally the guiding officer, McNicol, asked Lieut. Jeffries to have the guns of his tank fired as it advanced. Jeffries ran round the machine to give the order. He did not return, but the guns began firing. Just then there reached McNicol Lieut. Ashmead,¹⁴ a fine leader commanding the foremost platoon. "The battalion's cut to pieces," he said. "It's no use going further." McNicol dashed round the side of the leading tank and shouted to the men within: "Halt your tank, keep it where it is, and keep your guns going." The other tanks which, on his suggestion, lay nearer the sides of the road, affording some shelter, also halted. A gust of machine-gun fire knocked down all the guides, but all but one¹⁵ managed to plunge into the ditch. Ashmead presently found McNicol there, shot through the ankle, and carried him down the road on his back. The stoppage quickly communicated itself to the infantry in the ditches. As Col. Knox-Knight¹⁶ climbed to the road to ascertain the position, the officer of the second tank arrived, badly wounded, to say that the tanks were being shot through by anti-tank rifles and armour piercing bullets. Just then some movement by them caused the fire, which had lulled, to sweep the road again, driving the troops to their cover. A runner said the tanks were coming back. Capt. Hickey (commander of the tank section) says that Knox-Knight "in amazement" asked him if they had orders to turn. "Certainly not,"

¹³ Many lives were saved by the fact that on the northern side the road was slightly embanked and German posts north of it had to elevate their fire, thus missing objects on the southern side.

¹⁴ Lt. C. G. J. Ashmead, M.C., 37th Bn. School teacher; of Benalla and Gundowring, Vic.; b. Winton North, Vic., 12 Aug. 1895. Killed in action, 30 Aug. 1918.

¹⁵ Pte. H. Tyres (No. 1298; 37th Bn.). Farmer; of Numurkah, Vic.; b. Narng West, Vic., 1894. Killed in action, 10 Aug. 1918.

¹⁶ He had led for 300 yards and then moved after the first company.

was the reply. An order to advance was carried by Hickey to the tanks and by Lieut. Heseltine¹⁷ (adjutant to the 37th) to the infantry. Heseltine found the second and third tanks coming back,¹⁸ the foremost one waiting anxiously for instructions. Hickey began to turn the rear tanks in order to advance again and narrowly escaped being squeezed between them in the process. Heseltine found that Lieut. Roadknight¹⁹ of the leading company had been mortally wounded; Lieut. McNicol was gone; the troops were disorganised. He decided that all chance of success had disappeared, and on seeking the colonel found that he, too, had been killed.²⁰ Maj. Robertson, the second in command, moved the troops into the open fields away from the road, and Hickey, learning that the infantry had been stopped, ordered the tanks to return. In the leading one only the driver and one gunner were unwounded; the other crews had many wounded or badly shaken. But as soon as the tanks moved, the tempest broke out again over all the troops. An Australian officer, revolver in hand, ordered the tank crews on pain of death not to move until further command.

The rest of the column had not escaped injury—the aeroplane, almost brushing the avenue, had dropped bombs along it,²¹ one bursting on a waggon following the 40th Battalion with Stokes mortar shells.²² Animals and drivers were here strewn over the roadway. The infantry rushed to the road ditch but the drivers leading the mules, having orders not to leave them, stood to their animals on the road throughout. A German artillery barrage, high explosive and gas, at once fell upon the rear, but the road was quickly cleared, and the column was reformed and passed on. When the stoppage

¹⁷ Lt.-Col. S. H. Heseltine, 37th Bn. Officer of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Hemingford Grey, Hunts., Eng. and Melbourne; b. Islington, Eng., 16 Mar. 1881.

¹⁸ While Hickey turned these eastwards again his runner, Gnr. E. W. Stittle, went to the leading tank. The tanks had had orders to keep touch with the infantry, with whom they now had no contact. Indeed for the tank crews the whole affair was a nightmare—in their dark cabins they had no notion where the infantry was. Lt. Humphreys twice got out to scan the position, but could see neither infantry nor German machine-guns.

¹⁹ Lt. W. Roadknight, 37th Bn. Master mariner; of Melbourne and Sale, Vic.; b. Johnsonville, Vic., 13 Dec. 1885. Died of wounds, 11 Aug. 1918.

²⁰ By an anti-tank gun shell bursting against a tree.

²¹ The sky this night was full of German bombers, dropping parachute flares and bombing gullies.

²² Another wounded Lt. E. H. Fleiter (Albert Park, Vic.) and some of the 39th.

occurred ahead the column telescoped and then took cover in a ditch while waiting. Maj. Payne, commanding the 40th, finding the 37th returning in good order, halted them and took charge. The tank company commander, Maj. Grounds,²³ said to him: "We'll do whatever you want. I can order the tanks forward, but look at the state of the crews." Payne arranged with Maj. Maudsley of the 38th that his battalion should form a line astride of the road at the point reached, with flanks bent back; the 40th continued the flanks on either side of the road towards the old front line. Maj. Giblin was sent by Payne with Grounds to brigade headquarters to report this action and ask for orders.

With the tanks ahead motionless, officers of the 38th and 40th got their troops into position. At 3 a.m., upon one tank's flashing a signal down the road, the tempest broke out again. Immediately afterwards Giblin returned with confirmation of Payne's dispositions. The 37th and 39th were to withdraw, tanks standing fast till the infantry was clear. At 3.30—only just in time if they were to escape before daybreak—the tanks were allowed to withdraw. They had lost severely, and the 37th, though its casualties were much overestimated at brigade headquarters, had lost a quarter of its men engaged.²⁴

The scantiness of German references to this fight indicates that the 232nd R.I.R. (107th Divn.), which held the road, had little conception of the defeat it had inflicted. The regimental history, which otherwise would certainly have described the incident at length, merely says: "About midnight²⁵ the enemy attacked on the Roman road. In the light of flares three tanks were detected, followed by infantry in close order. The 8th Coy. by machine-gun fire caused the enemy great losses and compelled him to retire." Lt. Roth whose company (9th) was in a sunken road north of the highway writes: "On the night of Aug. 10/11 there was no chance of sleep. A tank again and again drove up the Roman road, to and fro. All shots of the anti-tank field gun effected nothing."

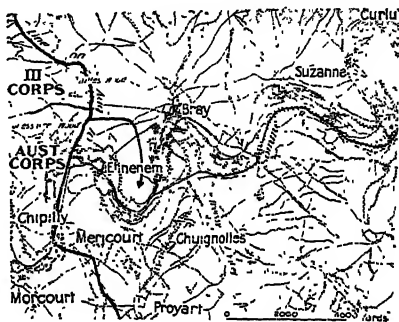
The 9th and 10th Brigades (3rd Divn.) were informed in time to cancel their contemplated operations for "mopping up." Of the operation astride of the Somme, the more important southern drive had ended in a sharp, almost complete, repulse.

²³ Lt.-Col. G. A. Grounds, D.S.O., 8th Bn., Tank Corps. Bank manager; of Boston, Lincs., Eng.; b. March, Eng., 19 Nov. 1886.

²⁴ The tanks lost 3 officers and 19 men, the 37th 3 officers and 103 others.

²⁵ Even the date given, the night of Aug. 9-10, is wrong.

The attack north of the Somme by the 13th Brigade was made over very different ground. Here for about ten miles as the crow flies, the northern riverside is keyed into the southern by a succession of peninsulas, four on the north side, four on the south. Most of the northern ones are almost precipitous along the eastern side, into which the river eats, but slope gently on the western. It all cases the northern peninsulas overlook the southern, some of the latter being barely above the flats. The villages of Chipilly, Etinehem, Bray and Suzanne lie successively in the northern bends, each of the last three overlooked by the cliffs of the peninsula west of it. Northwards from Chipilly, from Bray and from Suzanne, deep gullies eat into the plateau, the valley north of Chipilly being divided from the next bend only by a razor's edge on part of which lies Gressaire Wood. The next valley system, north of Bray, is very extensive and, together with the long Froissy valley south of the same river bend, formed an important factor in later operations.



Arrow shows intended attack.

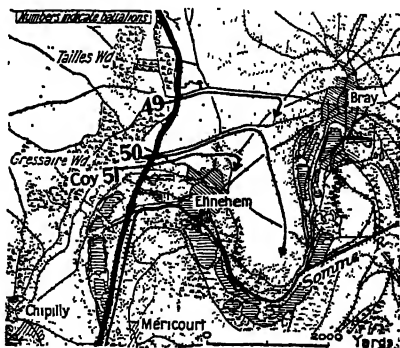
This night the northern attack was to advance from north of Chipilly peninsula across the north of Etinehem peninsula, and then line the steep eastern side of the latter, overlooking Bray and its valleys. Together with the southern advance it would cut off Méricourt peninsula, south of the river.

The 58th Division was uncertain of the precise position of the line on and north of Chipilly peninsula, but three Australian officers²⁶ reconnoitring early on the 10th found the forward edge of Gressaire and Tailles Woods firmly held by Americans of the 131st Regiment, behind whom the attack

²⁶ Maj. Roy Morell, formerly 13th Bde., then *liaison* officer with 58th Div.; Maj. N. M. Loutit, attached to 131st U.S. Infantry; and, separately, Capt. T. S. Louch, Intelligence Officer 13th Bde.

could safely assemble, although the Americans whom they visited appeared to have received no rations since August 8th. At 7 p.m. the 50th Battalion (S. Aust.) marched up the deep wooded gully to Gressaire Wood, halting at the quarry there just long enough for the company commanders to hurry to the razor neck and get a view of the forward edge of Gressaire Wood, and Etinehem on the Somme below, and the plateau north of it which they had to cross. They then led up their companies along the forward edge of the wood.²⁷ The 49th Battalion (Q.), which had crossed the Somme that evening, went a mile farther along the winding gully than the 50th, and then climbed to where the Bray-Corbie road passed through Tailles Wood on to the plateau. Each battalion had had a good meal. Each arrived just at 9.30 p.m. Gunners at the batteries behind the wood and Americans in the outposts waved them "good luck." The 49th (Lieut.-Col. Arrell²⁸) found two tanks waiting for it at a bend of the Bray-Corbie road behind the wood.

This attack was planned differently from that on the southern side. The left battalion (49th) was to break through along the Bray-Corbie road, and then throw out its leading company southwards on the sharp slope overlooking Bray and its river-bend, the other three companies forming a flank along the road back to the American front. But the 50th Battalion, which was to establish the main front along the eastern edge of Etinehem peninsula, was to advance by a roughly parallel road, 1,000 yards farther south, and, on reaching a certain cross-road, turn southwards and line the remaining edge of the slope. Behind the 50th went Lieut. Finlason's²⁹ company



²⁷ This smelt of German gas with which it had been deluged.

²⁸ Lt.-Col. W. L. Arrell, D.S.O. Commanded 49th Bn. 1918. School teacher; of South Brisbane; b. 21 Jan. 1885.

²⁹ Lt. R. F. Finlason, M.C., 51st Bn. Miner and station hand; of Boulder and Blackboy Hill, W.A.; b. Castlemaine, Vic., 19 Aug. 1893.

of the 51st³⁰ to cut off the Germans in Etinehem village by first stationing itself east of it, and at dawn mopping it up. The whole 13th Machine Gun Company was distributed among this infantry, and Finlason also had four Stokes mortars to cover his morning attack.

It had been hoped by Monash that four tanks (2nd Battalion) would be available, in which case the 50th would have had one. But the tank commander could not promise this—his machines had been in use for three days without repair, petrol was short, and they must keep to the roads. At 9.30 the two on the Bray-Corbie road moved off,³¹ the leader firing to front and to left, the other, 200 yards behind, doing the same so far as was safe. They quickly drew ahead and could be heard far down the road. The 49th followed—first the scouts in groups of three; then Capt. Tambling's³² company with Lieut. Strike's³³ platoon leading, all in sections in artillery formation, brushing the south of the road; next, Maj. Swain's company in similar formation, and after it a third. When the tanks started, machine-guns in German posts 200-300 yards ahead opened fire, but wildly and high, and they fled before the 49th reached them. At 1,000 yards out, the tanks now being far beyond, flares were fired by Germans ahead, evidently posts along a sunken road; well aimed shots whizzed past. Tambling's company deployed, but the flare light showed the Germans rising to retire. The company resumed artillery formation and pushed on. It was to be guided by a line of double telegraph posts along the Bray-Corbie road, but there were several such lines, and the one anxiety now was to know when the advance had reached its goal. Again scattered shots were fired from in front, and Tambling's company deployed, but a scout, Pte. Hockey,³⁴ worked round the post and captured it.³⁵ The tanks which had

³⁰ The 13th Bde. was one of those with only three battalions.

³¹ A third was kept at headquarters of the 49th.

³² Capt. R. Tambling, M.C., 49th Bn. School teacher; of Pratten, Q'land; b. Warwick, Q'land, 2 June 1895.

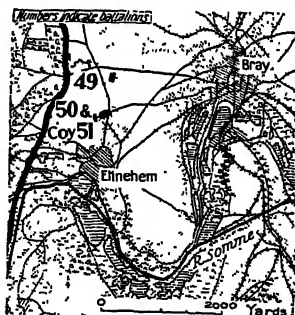
³³ Lt. C. Strike, 49th Bn. Blacksmith; of Charters Towers, Q'land; b. Charters Towers, 27 May 1896.

³⁴ Pte. A. V. Hockey M.M. (No. 3781; 49th Bn.). Station manager; of Toowoomba, Q'land; b. Goulburn, N.S.W., 1895.

³⁵ He killed two and captured five. The prisoners, all under 19, were terrified on hearing that their captors were Australians.

gone half a mile farther were now returning from the left front. Tambling posted his company astride of the road. Its southern platoon, going south, reached the head of a chine leading to the Somme. Here some German officer gathered a few men and a machine-gun behind a hedge and seemed to be trying to give the impression of a larger force. But the Australian scouts ahead at once attacked, shooting the brave leader, whose men then bolted. The left of the 50th was presently found near by. To the north the second and third companies of the 49th had formed their string of posts along the Bray-Corbie road back to the American line.

The 50th Battalion (Lieut.-Col. Salisbury), through lack of men, had organised each of its companies in two platoons. It had attacked along the southern road with Lieut. Hodge's³⁶ company as advanced guard on a front of 150 yards astride of the road, Hodge and four scouts leading; the other companies followed successively, each with one platoon as flank guard north of the road, and the other together with company headquarters in artillery formation south of it. By starting close on each other's heels the companies escaped the German shell-fire that answered the attack.³⁷ The battalion had been warned that probably its tank would not arrive, and started punctually without it. A quarter of a mile out, at the first cross-road, a German machine-gun fired and then vanished. At half a mile a flare went up, evidently from near the second cross-road, now close ahead, and five machine-gun posts 200 yards beyond the road opened with some dozen guns. Part of the leading company sheltered in the road, the rest lay down behind it. The 50th seemed to be faced by formidable opposition. But the first German flare had passed right over the battalion and fallen behind it. In its light, says an eyewitness, the 50th, only 400 strong, "looked like a brigade steadily mov-



³⁶ Lt. E. G. Hodge, 50th and 52nd Bns. Clerk; of Port Adelaide; b. Alberton, S.A., 2 Sep. 1892.

³⁷ The 50th could hear the 49th's tanks before the advance. Its own never came.



33. GUNS IN THE VALLEY BEHIND GRESSAIRE WOOD

The wood is seen in the distance.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E3123.
Taken on 22nd August, 1918.*

To face p. 696.



34. AN OUTPOST ABOVE BRAY

This photograph was taken on 13th August, 1918, after the 51st Battalion had completed the capture of this peninsula, but it shows how exposed the posts were to shelling from south of the river where nearly all the country here shown was held by the Germans. A German shell has just burst on the right. In the distance on the left is Froissy Valley. A machine-gun belonging to the post can be seen in the bushes.

ing." From the north came sound of fighting and of tanks. The fusillade upon the 50th suddenly ceased. Hodge, who extended his company at the cross-road, advanced but could find no Germans. It looked as if panic had struck them.

Their records show that this was so. The infantry facing the 13th Bde.'s attack included remnants of the 43rd Res. and 27th Divns. and of their original reinforcement, the 479th I.R. (243rd Divn.), but belonged mainly to the latest reinforcement, the 119th R.I.R. (26th Res. Divn.) which, as already stated, had been sent back across the Somme on the night of the 9th, and placed in support on the Méaulte-Etinehem road. By dawn it found that most of the half-exhausted troops ahead of it had withdrawn. Its II Bn. was apparently astride of the Bray-Corbie road with the III farther north and the I near Etinehem, farther south.

The companies near the Bray road had been ordered to retire, if strongly attacked, to a line north of Bray. The regimental history says that when the tanks approached, "the black monsters slowly rolled along the road towards us, spewing fire to front and flank. Out of the loophole and slits broke the bands of light from the electric lights inside, and gave the machine-guns good targets. The waggons were taken under fire with steel bullets by two heavy and several light machine-guns of the II Bn. The impact of their bullets struck bright sparks from the armour, which was strong enough to resist them, but the crew was uncannily able to overcome this sinister drumming on the steel walls, and extinguished the lights to make the aim more difficult. As the tanks came ever nearer and did not allow themselves to be held up, a small part of the 7th Company was seized by tank-panic and ran back. Only one platoon maintained its valiant stand in common with the 8th Company . . . the troops crept away, as the monsters approached their shelter pits, and let them drive by³⁸ . . . the two tanks drove on to Bray, one right up to the eastern edge of the little town; but when they found no opposition anywhere and marked their separation from the infantry, they turned round and drove back."

The history of the 27th Divn. says that, when the tanks and infantry appeared, "in the dark our anti-tank gunners could not fire and a panic overcame the troops—for the sake of truth it must be plainly said—and the road through Bray lay open to the enemy while at the same time the 43rd [Reserve] Divn. east of Etinehem drew back to the east bank of the Somme." Presumably these were the elements that faced the 50th Bn. The I/119th at Etinehem found that the British had broken through to the north of it.

Without opposition Hodge's company reached the area 500 yards farther on, where he expected to find the cross-road at which he was to turn southwards. No cross-road appeared—only tracks in plenty—the main road curving gently northward to meet the Corbie road at a Crucifix close above Bray.

³⁸ These presumably were troops north of the road. Elements of the 479th I.R., and even of the 247th R.I.R. there, seem to have withdrawn to the valley north of the road.

It was only after following it for some distance that Hodge realized that a mistake had been made. He sent back word; Maj. Fowler, Capt. Beresford and a number of other officers came up and, with their maps lighted by electric torches, tried to settle their position. Hodge went towards the Crucifix and Beresford towards a ravine close ahead, where he found Lieut. Fearnside³⁹ and a flank post of the 49th. This settled the matter,⁴⁰ and after half an hour's wait Hodge led his company southwards along the crest of the spur till this dipped suddenly southwards, and there set it to dig in, with right flank thrown back westwards.⁴¹ About midnight Maj. Fowler reported that the 50th was on its objective. Finlason's company of the 51st duly dug in across the roads leading north-east out of Etinehem.

The Australian leaders expected to capture 300 Germans in Etinehem, but when at daybreak Finlason's company entered the village it found only one. It turned out that the Germans had more than one avenue of escape. A half destroyed foot-bridge led to Méricourt spur; and the dawn airman, calling for flares to locate the new front, found Hodge's company half a mile farther north than had been believed, the southern half of the spur being left open.⁴²

The history of the 26th Res. Divn., whose I/119th R.I.R. held Etinehem, says that its commander, finding that his cyclist patrols met fire wherever he sent them, had the choice "of playing a futile Leonidas stunt" or using the morning mist on the 11th to cross the river south of Bray on a plank bridge a foot wide. He chose the latter course and withdrew his 150 men to Froissy valley.

Some Germans, however, still clung to the steep slope and the riverside strip below, under the nose of the 50th, and

³⁹ Lt. F. Fearnside, 49th Bn. Orchardist; of Stanthorpe, Q'land; b. York, Eng., 30 June 1884.

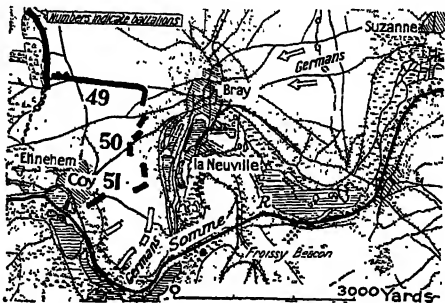
⁴⁰ The cross-road on the maps was really a bend of the main road.

⁴¹ While it was digging on the edge of the valley a voice ahead called, "Who are you?" Someone replied "Australians here, don't shoot." The stranger said, "All right, come on Australia," and fired 30 shots from a machine-gun. Thinking it was an Englishman or American, who was out in his bearings, the men cursed him and shouted that they were the 50th Bn. "Come on, Australia," repeated the stranger and fired another burst; Lt. A. P. Bills (Laura, S.A.) was killed and a dozen others hit. As soon as it was realised that the speaker was German, a bomb was thrown, but he escaped through the long grass, leaving his machine-gun.

⁴² Finlason himself, when east of Etinehem trying to get touch with the 50th, had almost run into a number of men. On his calling, a voice shouted, in German, and (as an account of the incident says) "he dived west and they dived east."

fired from here at the Australian stretcher-bearers, hitting a dozen of them.⁴³

Daylight found the 13th Brigade in a commanding but difficult position. Most of its posts looked down through steep ravines, in front or flank, on the roofs and church tower of Bray and the many-folded valley north of it, or south-eastwards on the hairpin river bend and across to Froissy Beacon high on the southern bank. A red-nosed German aeroplane came over again and again, as if in doubt. The airman, waving his hand, was fired at by the posts. The little chalk trenches had been partly covered with cut grass, but were startlingly plain on the green, and presently German guns, some directly enfilading from Proyart way, others behind Neuville or Froissy, others farther east, shot straight into the posts; some guns sniped even at single men. In Hodge's company eight were killed; Beresford's had two posts blown out; a shell burst in one of Fowler's posts. Mainly at this stage Tambling's company had 49 out of 110 men hit. For four hours German troops, seemingly three battalions, moved from Suzanne way down the hill slopes east of Bray, and through Bray⁴⁴ to dead ground close before the Australian posts. They also reappeared on the south-eastern quarter of Etinehem peninsula.⁴⁵



⁴³ Including some that went out and brought in the wounded German officer who had tried to "bluff" the 49th. At another post Lt. W. R. Wills (Semaphore, S.A.), hearing a man call, jumped from the trench and ran to bring him in. Wills's batman, who followed, was shot through the head.

⁴⁴ One post could see them crossing the square, and sniped at long range.

⁴⁵ They were mainly along the ridge south of Hodge, but at 11 o'clock a brigade scout, L.-Cpl. R. H. Coulter (Gooburru, Bundaberg, Q'land) saw a line of men digging in at Etinehem cemetery, 500 yards south of the village. He was certain they were Germans, but for hours the infantry commanders felt sure they were Finlason's company. As the news spread scores of eyewitnesses looked curiously down from Gressaire heights on these dozen figures, each digging furiously his little rifle-pit five paces from his neighbour. The artillery begged leave to fire, but not till Lt.-Col. Christie of the 51st in person, and a patrol sent separately by Finlason, made sure they were Germans, was permission given. Then several batteries lashed them with shrapnel. The Germans lay low in their pits but these were probably too shallow to give much protection and all movement there appeared to cease.

Everything seemed to foreshadow a counter-attack against the now protruding line. The artillery was asked to shell the valley ahead, and Bray, and the opposite slopes; but no attack followed⁴⁶ and eventually more than one Australian officer concluded that the signs of counter-attack had a different origin—that the panic on the previous night must have been general, the German troops abandoning Bray; that their staff had not discovered this until the red aeroplane came over; and that the troops were now creeping back, by order, to their positions.

German accounts show that this was so. Panic had caused a general retirement to the spur behind Bray, though at the time (as the history of the 27th Divn. says) the Australians "had not the slightest suspicion of what a result lay open to them." Even at 27th Divn. H.Q. near Curlu, five miles to the east, hostile troops were expected every minute, and defence was hurriedly organised. South of the Somme the retiring I/119th found wild rumour flying everywhere. When it was realised that their opponents were not even in Bray, the remnants of the 265th R.I.R. (200 strong under Capt. Meht) and of the 120th and 137th I.R., were ordered up from Cappy to retake the cliff top west of Bray, half the I/119th (then guarding the bridgehead below) being ordered to join them. Shelling made the march difficult, but these troops took up their positions on Etinehem peninsula, though the 265th could not gain the top of the cliffs until two alert Australian posts, which they had vainly tried to cut out, were destroyed (according to the German account) by heavy machine-gun fire. A line was re-established "but," says the history of the 119th R.I.R., "the night of terror at Bray was not so soon forgotten." The history of the 27th Divn. says that "the anxious night" will never be forgotten by those who experienced it.

Thus so far as concerned the northern attack, made against Germans who had been under great pressure for three days, Monash's conception of the Germans' condition was fully justified. But if he intended the tanks in the southern attack similarly to scare the enemy, this plan was not made clear to either tank or infantry leaders, and was not carried out. Whether, if it had been, all the German posts there—reserves who had been almost undisturbed for two days and were attacked on a narrower front—would have fled may be doubted. The result hoped for justified

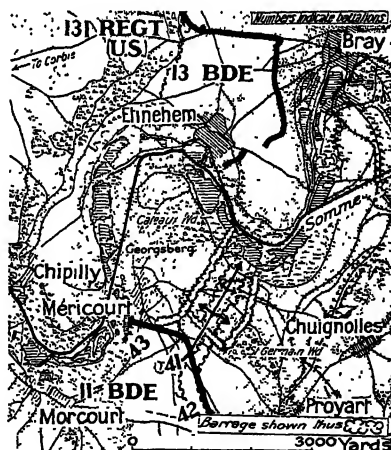
⁴⁶ Except a sortie about 1 p.m. by some German post, re-established half way along the northern flank near the Bray-Corbie road. Lt. Fearnside and five of the 49th who were hobbling back wounded were intercepted by men from the post. Company headquarters saw the incident and a party tried to rescue the prisoners, but after having several men killed or wounded gave up the attempt.

the taking of some risk. But the difference between conditions on the Roman road and elsewhere was insufficiently recognised.

However, the attack of the 2nd Division, launched immediately after the 10th Brigade and its tanks had withdrawn and the morning mist had spread, carried the line south of the Roman road to the upper course of Froissy valley, and left the Germans north of the road to be swept up by other means. General Gellibrand ordered the 10th Brigade, which now took over the front north of the Roman road, to send patrols to Proyart and, if it was empty, beyond it. As the 2nd Division also discovered, Proyart was held with many machine-guns. But on the other flank, at Méricourt, the Germans were now most precariously placed with the

13th Brigade behind them on the Etinehem bend. Gellibrand accordingly ordered that they should be cut off at sunset that night by the seizure of the old Amiens line behind them. The thrust—1,200 yards deep on a front of some 500 yards—would end on the Somme; it would be made by the 41st (Q.) Battalion of the 11th Brigade. Behind a creeping barrage three companies, one behind the other, would move like a piston

down a cylinder, between two standing barrages, one close on each flank.⁴⁷ After going a third of the distance the third company would stop, and mop up and hold the area passed through, facing to each flank. At two-thirds of the way, after crossing a valley, half of the second company would do the



⁴⁷ The heavy artillery was to bombard machine-gun nests beyond the flanks, and Méricourt village. Machine-guns were to lay a barrage on each flank, and heavy trench mortars to bombard the road junctions at the southern edge of Méricourt. Two Stokes mortars went with the attack.

same. The leading company and half the second would seize the final area on and beyond the high riverside ridge (known to the Germans as "Georgsberg"). The Germans cut off in and around Méricourt would be mopped up at dawn by the 43rd Battalion (S. Aust.).

The 13th and 16th Battalions had, on the night of the 9th, pushed to the full August 8th objective in the Amiens Line.⁴⁸ The 41st now had to assemble there in daylight and did so by trickling a few men at a time along the trenches. At 8.30 p.m.⁴⁹ still in bright daylight, the barrage fell, but so thin⁵⁰ that it merely aroused the German posts in Méricourt and in Cateaux Woods to the left of the objective and St. Germain Woods to the right. A smoke barrage, however, screened the companies from such Germans as were actually behind them, at Méricourt. The barrage of the Vickers machine-guns kept down fire from the flanks, and Lieut. Brown⁵¹ of the 11th L.T.M. Battery, standing in the open, turned his two mortars on the nearer German machine-guns, and suppressed them until he was mortally wounded. By hard fighting with one machine-gun post after another the 41st advanced along the system, the men dropping into the old trenches and clearing them as they went, this cover saving many lives. By the time the valley was crossed, and the road near the second hilltop reached, the artillery fire had ceased. Against one machine-gun holding up his platoon Lieut. Woodford⁵² adopted the plan of sending his men to attack from each side while he attacked from the front. He received the full stream of fire and was killed, but the gun was taken. On descending the Somme slope as far as the scrubby bank where the trenches ended, the officers fired the success signal—a green flare. It was now dark, and later, while the Queenslanders were digging, shovels were also heard on this slope below. Lieuts.

⁴⁸ That is, to the Méricourt-Proyart road. A German machine-gun crew which crossed this in the morning was rushed by Lt. L. M. Player (Sydney) and some men, and the gun captured.

⁴⁹ "Summer" time. The true time was 7.30.

⁵⁰ One account says the 3rd Div.'s batteries were short of ammunition.

⁵¹ Lt. D. Brown, M.C. 11th L.T.M. Bty. Locomotive fireman; of Charters Towers, Q'land; b. Charters Towers, 29 Oct. 1895. Died of wounds, 17 Aug. 1918.

⁵² Lt. J. E. Woodford, 41st Bn. Linotype operator; of Charters Towers, Q'land; b. Grangetown, Yorks., Eng., 21 Feb. 1885. Killed in action, 12 Aug. 1918.

Hanley and MacGibbon⁵³ (intelligence officer of the 41st) and a private went down, bombs in hand, to explore, when they heard someone cough on the slope above. MacGibbon threw his bomb which was answered by German bombs. After a sharp tussle those Germans who were left surrendered, and the two officers marched them up the hill to the outposts.

At a cost of 74 casualties to itself⁵⁴ the 41st had captured its objective and nearly 200 prisoners,⁵⁵ and during the night 2 officers and 70 others cut off in Cateaux Woods surrendered in a body. At 4.20 the 43rd began to clear Méricourt, and there and in Cateaux Woods captured 85 prisoners, 13 machine-guns, and many stores without losing a man.

The exposure of the German forces in the Méricourt area and on the "Georgsberg" which had caused the Australian leaders to attack, had also induced the German leaders as early as 8 a.m. on Aug. 11 to order the withdrawal of their troops there. It was, however, too dangerous to move by day, and therefore the local commanders prepared for a withdrawal at dark. Before they moved the attack struck them.⁵⁶ It reached the headquarters of the composite battalion of the 97th I.R. (108th Divn.) holding that front, and captured the battalion commander and one company. The party met by the two Australian officers on the Somme bank was probably the forward zone garrison from Méricourt with a number of whom Lt. Hein managed to escape by that route. The attack also struck the northern flank of Dultz's Regiment⁵⁷ of whose two northern companies few escaped. Farther south Dultz's machine-guns were turned round and fired into the Australians' flank. The Germans formed a new line on Hill 81, west of Chuignolles.

In the area still hemmed by the Australian advances on the flanks—St. Germain Woods and the Proyart basin—a nibbling process began forthwith. It will be remembered that the 2nd Division noted a great decrease in the activity of German machine-guns at Proyart late on August 11th. The 10th Brigade's posts were impressed by the same change early

**The patrol
battle at
Proyart**

⁵³ Capt. F. W. MacGibbon, M.C., 41st Bn. Sugar cane planter; of Proserpine, Q'land; b. Brisbane, 17 Jan. 1891. He had seen from the old line the success signal and with a scout, Pte. J. P. Bell (Charters Towers, Q'land) had come over the captured ground, taking some prisoners but seeing nothing of the 41st, who were on guard to right and left.

⁵⁴ Including Capt. P. F. Calow (Sandgate, Q'land, and Armidale, N.S.W.) and Lts. L. H. Rogers (Fortitude Valley, Q'land; died 2 Dec. 1930) and F. E. Ferroux (Mackay, Q'land), badly wounded.

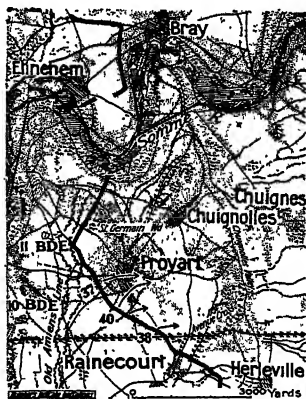
⁵⁵ Of the 97th I.R. and 33rd Pion. Bn. (108th Divn.), and 13th I.R. (13th Divn.).

⁵⁶ The German accounts, as usual, describe it as made by "thick masses"—actually, as then usual, it was made by a light force.

⁵⁷ I/13th I.R., II/203rd R.I.R. and fragments of sister units.

on the 12th. Lieut. Crosby (40th Bn.) north of the Roman road reported that his men had been walking in the open without being fired on. On the previous day Maj. Maudsley of the 38th, in his much shelled headquarters at la Flaque, had asked for leave to attempt clearing the valley-side behind Proyart.⁵⁸ He had received no instructions, but next morning his two centre companies reported that the Germans seemed to have withdrawn. He ordered patrolling to begin, and Brig.-Genl. McNicoll, on hearing from the 40th also, directed his three forward battalions to try to gain by patrolling a line on the far side of Proyart valley. By arrangement with General Cannan, McNicoll extended his brigade's left 500 yards northwards to include the whole front opposite Proyart. Cannan informed the battalion next in line, the 42nd (Q.) that the Germans were withdrawing and ordered it to keep touch with and press them. The divisional artillery and machine-guns were asked not to fire this day west of the road from Avenue Cross to Chuignolles.

The first patrols to move were those of Capt. Fairweather's company of the 38th, north of the Roman road. They advanced north-east across the open, passing the Proyart-Rainecourt road. But after going a quarter of a mile they were stopped by machine-guns nearly half a mile ahead, along the Chuignolles-Rainecourt road, particularly deadly being the fire from Avenue Cross. To clear this and let the patrols get on, Capt. Dench,⁵⁹ whose company lay astride the Roman road, at 10 a.m. ordered Lieut. Baxter⁶⁰ with the centre platoon to seize that post as



⁵⁸ He urged that no time be lost as the Germans' morale seemed to be failing. On the 11th two posts had been brought in as prisoners. One had been seen in the mist, 80 yards from Lt. H. F. Poole's company. As soon as the men could be recognised as German, L.-Cpl. J. C. Lewis (Port Melbourne, Vic.) and Pte. E. A. G. Smith (Newcastle, N.S.W.) rushed them.

⁵⁹ Capt. H. Dench, 38th Bn. Estate agent; of Camberwell, Vic.; b. South Melbourne, 29 Apr. 1887. Killed in action, 24 Aug. 1918.

⁶⁰ Lt. F. J. Baxter, M.C., 38th Bn. School teacher; of Miamia and Leichardt, Vic.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 17 July 1892. Died 19 June 1921.

soon as possible, Lieut. McColl's⁶¹ platoon, in the wheatfield south of the road, assisting him.

Meanwhile the foremost platoons of the 40th and 37th also had gone out as patrols, advancing "by bounds," other platoons following several hundred yards in rear ready to come up and tackle any posts that the others located. The patrol of the right company of the 40th, led by Lieut. Rock,⁶² reached some old trenches near the Proyart-Rainecourt road, from which it could just look into the valley south-east of Proyart where the objective lay. But the whole area being open fields the platoon was seen and heavily shelled and machine-gunned—the enemy's new line appeared to lie along the farther slope. Both of Rock's Lewis guns and most of his men were hit, and he went back to bring up the next platoon; but the Germans shelled any movement here so heavily that the company was stopped all day in the precarious shelter of some old British Nissen huts. The patrol of the 40th's left company under Lieut. Parry⁶³ found meals left on the tables in Proyart, and one or two machine-guns hastily abandoned. Patrols of the 37th found similar conditions in the centre and north of the village,⁶⁴ but on emerging into the open valley beyond, were sharply fired on from near the railway⁶⁵ which, after crossing on an embankment the valley south-east of the village, passed northwards in a cutting along the far side of the valley. Sergt. Billing⁶⁶ of the 40th, scouting alone, saw beyond this railway, just north of the Proyart-Chuignes road, a line of trenches full of Germans, who, with supports in the woods edging Froissy valley, made the railway there difficult to approach. Sergt. McCrohon⁶⁷ (37th) also, with a patrol,⁶⁸ after surprising and capturing six Germans in a dugout, noted

⁶¹ Lt. H. McColl, 38th Bn. Accountant; of Bendigo, Vic.; b. Bendigo, 14 Dec. 1888. Killed in action, 12 Aug. 1918.

⁶² Lt. C. W. D. Rock, 40th Bn. Bank clerk; of Launceston, Tas.; b. Nymagee, N.S.W., 17 Dec. 1890.

⁶³ Lt. L. L. Parry, 40th Bn. School teacher; of Elliott, Tas.; b. Lefroy, Tas., 12 May 1895.

⁶⁴ Lt. F. R. Kenley's patrol captured one German there. (Kenley belonged to Elsternwick, Vic.)

⁶⁵ Part of the old civilian narrow-gauge line from Rosières to Fricourt.

⁶⁶ Sgt. E. W. Billing, D.C.M., M.M., (No. 128; 40th Bn.). Labourer; of North West Coast, Tas.; b. St. Leonards, Tas., 4 Aug. 1886.

⁶⁷ Cpl. (T/Sgt.) W. C. McCrohon, M.M. (No. 2730; 37th Bn.). Boiler-maker; of Chatswood, N.S.W.; b. Tingha, N.S.W., 29 Sep. 1894.

⁶⁸ Of Capt. W. L. Allen's company, centre of the 37th. (Allen belonged to Albury, N.S.W. and Toorak, Vic.)

these posts. Through these reconnaissances both Parry's patrol and the nearest part⁶⁹ of the 37th under Lieut. Long⁷⁰ were enabled to reach separate points on the railway south-east and east of the village respectively. Farther north, during the next four hours, working cautiously as there was no time limit, Lieut. Urquhart⁷¹ and parts of the left company of the 37th (Capt. Towl⁷²) reached the cemetery (known as Cross on Shrine) 200 yards west of it. But the two remaining platoons of the right company, trying to cross the open east of the village, were stopped by intense fire from the German posts. At 2.30 Lieut. Kershaw⁷³ with a patrol tried to find a way for them, but when near the railway he was killed, and Sergt. Toogood⁷⁴ and others wounded.

Meanwhile the main obstacle to the 38th had been removed. At the Roman road Lieut. Baxter with four very small parties had worked forward quickly—one party along the road ditch, the others by alternate rushes past a derelict tank⁷⁵ to an old trench 100 yards from Avenue Cross—and finally, after sharp preparatory fire by another platoon, had, on a prearranged signal, rushed the post from three sides. It was a long charge and two Lewis gunners were shot before the post was reached and surrendered. Including several small posts near by, 29 Germans with 3 machine-guns were captured. A few of McColl's platoon arrived to take over the posts—their leader was afterwards found dead in the wheatfield. German reinforcements from the woods in Froissy valley filtered up an old trench near by and also to posts along the Chuignolles road. The 38th though pounded with shells clung to its objective lower on the slope.⁷⁶

The 38th's attack came against the centre of the 232nd R.I.R.

⁶⁹ Of the right company under Lt. P. L. Aitken (Toorak, Vic.)

⁷⁰ Lt. C. R. Long, 37th Bn. Law clerk; of Melbourne; b. South Yarra, Vic., 14 Mar. 1894.

⁷¹ Lt. T. H. Urquhart, 37th Bn. Meatworks' manager; of Malvern, Vic., and Parramatta, N.S.W.; b. Yendon, Vic., 7 Nov. 1881.

⁷² Capt. P. G. Towl, D.S.O., 37th Bn. Geologist; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 28 Dec. 1879. Died of wounds, 8 Sep. 1918.

⁷³ Lt. J. Kershaw, 37th Bn. Farmer; of Carron Downs, Vic.; b. Belfast, Ireland, 1891. Killed in action, 12 Aug. 1918.

⁷⁴ L.-Sgt. E. G. Toogood (No. 721; 37th Bn.). Orchardist; of Box Hill, Vic.; b. Camperdown, Vic., 10 Sep. 1895. Died of wounds, 13 Aug. 1918.

⁷⁵ One of the Mark V* that helped the 2nd Div. on Aug. 9.

⁷⁶ It lost 3 officers and 84 others this day and 1 and 18 on Aug. 10-11.

(107th Divn.). Most of the 10th Company of that regiment was lost and the 2nd suffered heavy casualties. The Germans seen were trying to retake the position.

At noon the 40th, then held up west of the valley, was ordered by the brigadier to push on. At 3 o'clock Lieut. McMillan of the left company worked his scouts, and after them his platoon, along the railway towards Parry's position. German outposts across the valley enfiladed the line, but in twos and threes, hugging bank and cutting and sheltering in old trenches, they got there. Finding the support platoon in the village, McMillan told its commander, Sergt. Statton,⁷⁷ to dribble two Lewis gun teams to a bend of the embankment, and, while they suppressed a machine-gun and snipers under the trees on the Chuignes road, McMillan moved his platoon safely into the valley. His scouts found that the trenches above them, their objective, were empty⁷⁸ and, despite machine-gun fire from the Chuignes road close on the left, the platoon was dribbled into them.

At this stage about 6 p.m., a message arrived from the 37th, which after bringing up a fresh company on the right⁷⁹ was going to try again to advance from the village. McMillan, in the valley, and Sergt. Statton, at the northern end of the captured trench, could see the machine-guns that were stopping the 37th—a line of four guns 150 yards east of the railway. Statton undertook to turn his two Lewis guns on these while the 37th attacked. An N.C.O. and a dozen of the 37th made the rush, but the German machine-guns could not be suppressed, and only two survivors of the attacking party were seen to get back. Then Statton, getting three men to follow him, left his position, worked along the bank of the Chuignes road to a point eighty yards south of the southernmost German machine-gun, and from there, revolver in hand, dashed over the open towards it. Its crew was intent on the 37th, and, reaching the post, he shot two gunners, his companions⁸⁰ shooting the others. Rushing on Statton shot

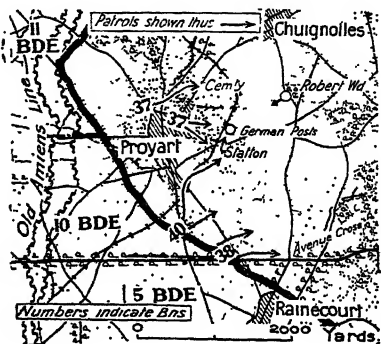
⁷⁷ Sgt. P. C. Statton, V.C., M.M. (No. 506; 40th Bn.). Farmer; of Tyenna, Tas.; b. Beaconsfield, Tas., 21 Oct. 1890.

⁷⁸ The scouts, Sgt. E. W. Billing and Pte. W. Cox (Deloraine, Tas.), pushed on. Detecting a post 300 yards away, Billing crept to a rubbish heap, from which he shot at 200 yards three of the garrison. The remainder fled.

⁷⁹ Lt. A. M. Murdoch's, to relieve Lt. P. L. Aitken's.

⁸⁰ Cpl. W. J. W. Upchurch (Huonville, Tas.) and Ptes. L. Styles (Ringarooma, Tas.) and N. T. Beard (Melton Mowbray, Tas.).

down the second crew⁸¹ and then headed for the third and fourth, but they fled, abandoning their guns. At this stage the machine-guns at Robert Wood again opened, hitting two of the Tasmanians.⁸² But the main obstacle had been cleared and the right of the 37th under Lieut. Narik⁸³ reached the railway about dusk. The German posts retired leaving eight machine-guns. Farther south, as the right company of the 40th was still faced by heavy fire, most of it was moved round to McMillan's position and thence dribbled out towards the objective. At dark the posts of the 40th advanced 200 yards.⁸⁴



Because of the Australian thrusts north of the Somme and south of the Roman road, the 108th Divn., whose left regiment (122nd) had defended the south of Proyart, had been ordered on the evening of August 11th to withdraw to the spur east of Proyart valley. Its history says that after daylight its advanced posts on the eastern edge of the village were slowly thrust back. It was probably the northern posts of this regiment that Statton seized.

The task given by Brig.-Genl. Cannan (11th Bde.) to the 42nd Battalion, in the area north of the 37th, involved clearing all enemy posts from the strip—a mile or more wide—between the patrols of the 10th Brigade on the right and the ground now held by the 41st on the left. The right company of the 42nd, first to receive the order, sent a patrol under Lieut. Price⁸⁵ through the northern end of Proyart (which was left to the 10th Brigade) and thence north-eastwards along the road towards Chuignolles. An hour later Lieut. McLean⁸⁶

⁸¹ After he had fired his remaining cartridges at it a surviving German came at him with the bayonet, but Statton wrenched away the rifle and bayoneted him. Statton was awarded the Victoria Cross.

⁸² Styles was killed and Upchurch wounded.

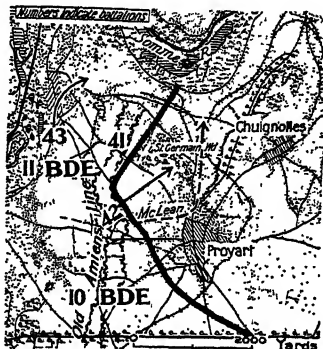
⁸³ Lt. E. F. Narik, 37th Bn. Wool-buyer; of Melbourne; b. Carlton, Vic. 8 Sep. 1888.

⁸⁴ In this day's operation the 40th had some 50 casualties, and the 37th 27.

⁸⁵ Lt. J. H. N. Price, M.C., 42nd Bn. Farmer; of Brisbane; b. Homerton. near Hamilton, Vic., 1 Apr. 1889.

⁸⁶ Maj. J. McLean, D.S.O., M.C., 42nd Bn. Farmer; of Warwick, Q'land; b. Warwick, 28 Oct. 1896.

with an extended platoon of the same company advanced over the open in the same direction, dodging bursts of machine-gun fire by lying down. Next, working northwards along the road from Proyart towards the Somme, McLean reached a point behind St. Germain Wood, actually in rear of the Germans facing the other companies. When these companies started, the fire of German machine-guns and artillery increased to great intensity. The Australian batteries were restricted by their orders, and at some huts in St. Germain Wood, and at the quarry behind it, a large body of the enemy held out. Stokes mortars would have greatly helped, but here too their probable usefulness had been overlooked. Eventually the supporting artillery put fifty shells into the huts. The German artillery, misled by the appearance of Australians on the ridge to the east, vigorously shelled the huts also, heedless of the flares fired by the German infantry. The Queenslanders then advanced covered by their Lewis guns; 100 prisoners were captured and many machine-guns, of which McLean's patrol took seven. On the ridge south of the Somme Germans could be seen streaming eastwards to escape encirclement.

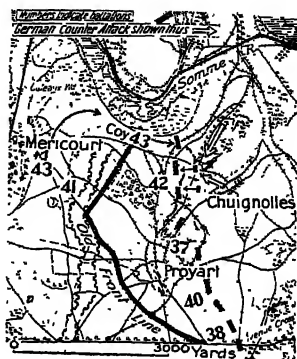


The 42nd, which entered the fight with little over 300 rifles,⁸⁷ had to move over open slopes vehemently shelled, but, after the most difficult fighting so far experienced by it in the war, it advanced over the hill east of Proyart gully until well beyond its objective and the flank of the 10th Brigade. Below, in a branch of Froissy valley, lay Chaignolles. German histories make it clear that the 42nd reached the village and the Germans believed they had lost it. On the hill north of it German troops in old trenches ahead of a solitary platoon of the 42nd, made plain signs of surrender, though their officers tried to prevent them. But the Australian post⁸⁸—seven men and a

⁸⁷ The history of the German regiment attacked speaks of "strong masses."

⁸⁸ Apparently near a ruined windmill beyond the cross-roads.

Lewis gun under Lieut. Boorman⁸⁰—had no support nearer than 300 yards, and at this stage (about 6 p.m.) German reinforcements began to pour up the valley. Boorman's Lewis gunner, lying at the cross-roads on the hill, fired alternately down the roads—now into the valley, now along the spur, where the Germans were thick in Luc and Long Woods. Up the valley came several hundreds with many machine-guns, and on this front the 42nd, now holding a 2,000 yards front with 250 men, fell back several hundred yards to behind the Proyard-Bray road.⁹⁰ Capt. Jack was killed and Lieuts. O'Connor⁹¹ and McLean, and many N.C.O.'s were hit. At 4 p.m. a company of the 43rd (S. Aust.) was guided up through heavy shelling by Capt. French⁹² and Lieut. MacGibbon along the Somme slope on the left, and extended the flank along the riverside ridge.⁹³



The 42nd had advanced farther than its own records admit. The remnants of the exhausted 13th, 15th and 97th I.R. were driven off the hill north of Chuignolles. The history of the 17th Hussar Regt. speaks of "a vehement fight to seize Chuignolles." At 3.40 the 478th I.R., between Proyard and Chuignolles sent up its S.O.S. signal—the German artillery had already for ten minutes been laying down "annihilation fire." The 478th was hard pressed;⁹⁴ but two companies of its reserve battalion,⁹⁵ together with two that had fallen back on the village, two of the 7th Pion. Bn., and remnants of the 13th and 43rd Res. Divns., counter-attacked up the valley. Hill 81 was recaptured with a cheer. The 122nd concentrated its fire northwards, swung

⁸⁰ Lt. A. C. Boorman, M.C., 42nd Bn. Concert artist (under stage name Arthur Riscoe) of Brisbane; b. Yorks., Eng., 19 Nov. 1892.

⁹⁰ One platoon, in trenches west of Robert Wood, lay low and retired at dark.

⁹¹ Lt. W. L. O'Connor, M.C., M.M., 42nd Bn. Engine cleaner; of Adelaide; b. Meningie, S.A., 20 Jan. 1896.

⁹² Maj. C. W. S. French, M.C., 41st Bn. School teacher; of Charters Towers, Q'land; b. Maryborough, Q'land, 3 June 1889.

⁹³ It had 24 men hit. As soon as it arrived French and MacGibbon had to ride back and bring up part of the 17th British Div. which took over the line that night. The relieving battalion of the Lincolnshire Regt. also was strongly shelled as it arrived. It took over from a company of 56 men.

⁹⁴ It was also shelled and bombed from the air by its own side.

⁹⁵ It had two battalions in line and one in reserve.

round two heavy machine-guns, and was about to throw in its support battalion when "the enemy fled back over the bare hill." In this day's fighting seven or eight forward field-guns of the 26th F.A.R. "had an opportunity to employ themselves splendidly."

The 42nd which, unassisted by artillery, had engaged at least twice its own number of infantry backed by artillery, held, not all its gains, but all the ground that Monash had intended to gain.⁹⁶

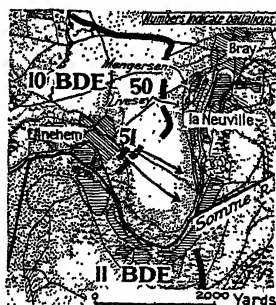
Meanwhile north of the river Brig.-Genl. Herring, at a conference with his battalion leaders, arranged to finish clearing

Etinehem peninsula on the night of August 12th. Harburn's and McBurnie's⁹⁷ companies of the 51st formed ahead of Finlason's,

astride of the road leading round the foot of the peninsula, and at 1 a.m. attacked behind an excellent barrage laid by the 10th and 11th A.F.A. Brigades

(under Lieut.-Col. Williams⁹⁸). They were met with a splutter of fire but the ground was taken without real resistance, about 100 Germans surrendering.⁹⁹ The 50th Battalion was to join up with the left of the 51st by sending patrols down the two steep chines leading to the Somme south-west of Bray, with platoons to dig in behind them. But a German post half way down the cliff

turned four machine-guns upon one platoon digging on the



⁹⁶ During this afternoon, which was quiet on the rest of the Corps front, General Monash was knighted by the King on the steps of Bertangles Château. Considerable ceremony was arranged, the broad drive being lined with Australian troops and captured guns.

⁹⁷ Capt. E. D. McBurnie, M.C., 51st Bn. Clerk; of South Melbourne; b. South Melbourne, 19 June 1885.

⁹⁸ Col. T. I. C. Williams, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 10th A.F.A. Bde., 1917, 1918-19, 12th A.F.A. Bde., 1917-18. Dental Surgeon; of Sydney; b. Sydney, 23 July 1880.

⁹⁹ While the new line was being laid out in the moonlight, Sgt. W. Lehane scouting ahead of a post saw men, and, challenging them, was fired on. He rushed them and they bolted to a dugout behind a bank. Lehane stood over its entrance, and at his call more than 60 came out as prisoners. Seeing two Australians above, he asked their help and marched the party in. At dawn, the Intelligence Officer of the 51st, Lt. S. E. Joyce (Burnie, Tas.), going round the front, found three Australians throwing lumps of earth over a bank at some Germans in rifle-pits evidently missed in the attack. Another Australian arriving, the five rushed the pits and 30 Germans surrendered. (Lehane who belonged to Mareeba, Q'land, was in charge of two guns of the 13th M.G. Coy. He died of wounds on 18 Sep. 1918.)

spur above, hitting many men including the leader,¹⁰⁰ and then attacked from the rear Lieut. Livesey's¹ patrol farther down the ravine, other Germans by the river attacking it at the same time. Corpl. Mengersen² who had led the patrol down the northern gully tried to help Livesey by attacking these Germans from below, but his bombs could not reach them up the slope. Livesey managed to extricate his party, and captured 15 prisoners and 2 machine-guns.³ Mengersen held on below the slope till next morning when Major Fowler ordered his withdrawal. The slope to the Somme was therefore not taken, but the German position there was precarious, and Livesey, attacking on the night of the 13th after Stokes mortar bombardment, found it abandoned. Posts were established at the foot of the cliff. On the night of the 14th the 131st American Regiment took over the front line.⁴

This attack fell on a provisional battalion of the 265th R.I.R. (108th Divn.) occupying with three heavy machine-guns an old enemy bivouac on the cliff side, and a similar remnant of the 137th I.R., south-east of Etinehem. The history of the 265th says that its two companies were attacked from above and from the road below and the front line driven back on the supports. From positions reached on the flank the Australians caused much loss to the supports which therefore retired to a trench 200 yards west of Bray.

On the Australian front the objective set on August 9th had thus everywhere been attained.

¹⁰⁰ Lt. J. D. L. Craven, 50th Bn. Draper; of Adelaide; b. N. Adelaide, 16 July 1891.

¹ Lt. G. M. Livesey, 50th Bn. Clerk; of Semaphore, S.A.; b. Broken Hill, N.S.W., 2 Aug. 1893.

² Cpl. (T/Sgt.) I. O. Mengersen, D.C.M., (No. 4560; 50th Bn.). Farmer; of Palmer, S.A.; b. Palmer, 29 Dec. 1898.

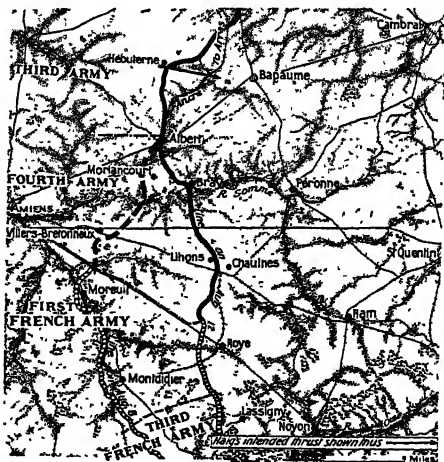
³ Of the platoons under Lts. F. B. McBryde (N. Adelaide) and H. L. Billing (Malvern, S.A.), which were to dig posts down the gullies, McBryde's captured a machine-gun and a trench-mortar.

⁴ The American company commander, an admirable officer though inexperienced, would not take over the post down the slope, considering it too isolated.

CHAPTER XVII

HAIG'S SECOND STROKE (AUGUST 21ST—25TH)

WITH the capture of Lihons and Proyart, following the advance of the Canadians to Chilly and of the French First Army to Andéchy and Marquivillers, the Allied offensive before Amiens temporarily ceased. It has already been explained that Foch on August 10th elated by the swift progress of the French Third Army in that morning's attack, and believing it to be due to the enemy's demoralisation, urged Haig that Rawlinson and Debeney should now strive with all available strength to reach the bridge-heads on the Somme from Péronne southwards; and that Haig, though not believing that demoralisation among the Ger-



mans was general, consented to order an advance to seize the crossings of the Somme. His hesitation was certainly justified; the lack of resistance to the Third French Army was due to the Eighteenth German Army's having on the previous night withdrawn by order to a prepared line. All parts of the British battle-line south of the Somme reported the Germans' resistance to be stiffening.¹ Haig foresaw great difficulties in driving

¹ On Aug. 11 (apparently when he attended a conference of Gen. Monash and the five Australian divisional commanders at Villers-Bretonneux) he actually received the impression that the 1st Aust. Div. at Lihons had received a serious defeat through the 5th Bav. Div.'s counter-attack. This was the opposite of the

them across the old Somme battlefields, whose edge the main advance had now reached. For eight miles in breadth and over twenty-five in width that wilderness—most like a long abandoned, stoneless grave-yard—was gridironed by old trenches (then overgrown ditches) while bands of rusty entanglement here and there marked the main trench-lines of 1916. Events of August 11th proved it impossible country for cavalry and favourable for German delaying tactics. Considerable German reserves must now be arriving and Haig had learnt from past failures that, as soon as opposition stiffened, he should use his own reserves, which were few, for a surprise elsewhere. He had chosen for the place the Third Army's sector north of the point where the German retirement hinged. There he would try to crash through to Bapaume. Later, when the Third Army in its turn had attracted German reserves, the Fourth Army would resume its offensive. This would greatly widen the extent of the enemy's fluid line and the Third Army, driving south-east from Bapaume, could outflank the Somme line at Péronne and help the Fourth to cross that difficult obstacle. In the north the Third Army would be helped by the First, north of Arras.

Haig had made these plans before Foch saw him on the 10th, and though in loyalty to Foch he pointed out to the Canadian general, Currie, the advantage of crossing the Somme on the enemy's heels, he came back from his interview with Maj.-General Lambert² more than ever determined on his own plan. Meeting General Byng³ he warned him to be ready to attack as soon as reserves could be transferred to him. At the same time Maj.-General Montgomery, chief of Rawlinson's staff, suggested to Maj.-General Davidson at G.H.Q. that, to avoid the cost of continuing to thrust against increasing resistance, Fourth Army should for a few days merely keep touch, and then make a full dress attack about

truth—even German histories agree that this counter-attack failed disastrously. The 1st Div. was, however, seriously checked by the Bavarian defence and lost heavily in forcing its way through it. Haig may have been misled by a false report that Lihons had been captured on Aug. 10, and may have assumed that it was subsequently lost. At this conference he thanked the Australian leaders and their troops for their effort.

² See p. 668.

³ At Monash's H.Q. on Aug. 11. Byng previously had not wished to attack across the old Somme battlefield.

August 14th, after the troops had rested. Haig decided to order both operations; Foch approved, and the orders were sent out next day. On August 15th at dawn the Fourth British and First French Armies would attack Chaulnes and the high ground east and north-east of Roye. Subsequently, about August 20th, the Third Army, strengthened by four infantry and two cavalry divisions and 200 tanks, would strike towards Bapaume.

The main task in the Chaulnes-Roye attack would fall to the French and Canadians. The Australian Corps would make a flank for them, as indicated in the marginal sketch (p. 716). The 5th and 4th Divisions, then mostly resting around Villers-Bretonneux and Corbie were ordered to assemble south of Harbonnières on the night of the 13th. At the moment, 4th Division was responsible for the sector taken over from III Corps north of the Somme, but was holding it only with its 13th Brigade and the 131st Regiment, U.S. Infantry. Monash had already obtained leave to organise these troops as a division, to be called the "Liaison Force" and to be commanded by General Wisdom of the 7th Brigade.⁴ The 4th Division was thus free to make the attack with its two other brigades. On the night of August 14th the 5th and 4th Divisions would relieve the 1st Division as well as the left brigade of the 1st Canadian Division south of the Chaulnes railway, and would attack at dawn.⁵ North of

⁴ The clearing of Etinehem peninsula on Aug. 13 and 14 was carried out under Gen. Wisdom's orders. The Liaison Force comprised the following troops:

13 Aust. Inf. Bde.
131st Regt. U.S. Inf.
58th Div. Artillery.
5th Bde., R.H.A.
124th U.S. M.G. Bn.
13th Aust. M.G. Coy.

13th Fld. Coy.
13th Aust. Fld. Amb.
130th U.S. Provisional Amb. Coy.
27th Coy., A.A.S.C.
One troop 13th A.L.H.

The staff was:

Commander—

Br.-Gen. E. A. Wisdom (7th Bde.)

General Staff—

Maj. R. G. Casey (Aust. Corps, H.Q.)
Capt. E. T. Bazeley (6th Bde. H.Q.)
Lt. G. F. Priestley (1st Aust. D.H.Q.)

Intelligence—

Lt. C. J. Brossois (18th Bn.)

"Q" Branch (Staff Captain)—

Capt. R. V. Spier (Aust. Corps H.Q.)
Capt. C. Abey (1st Aust. Div. Train)

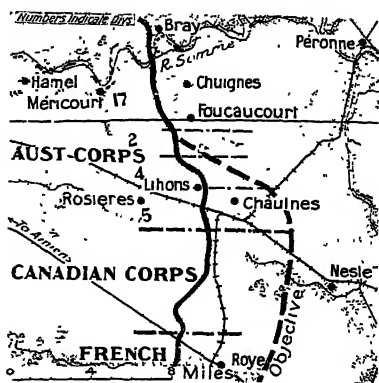
A/D.A.D.M.S.—

Maj. T. C. C. Evans (13th Fld. Amb.)

⁵ The 132nd American Regt. was allotted to 4th Div. as reserve brigade. Each division would be supported by about 25 Mark V tanks and some carriers, and the 5th Div. also by whippets. The artillery would cover them with barrage as far as it could, and then advance giving all possible support. Counter-battery work would be almost impossible, the German batteries not having yet been located.

them the 2nd would have to swing up its flank, but the rest of the Corps would confine itself to bombardment and peaceful penetration. To give the 3rd Division a short rest, the 17th British Division, though already ear-marked for Third Army's offensive, was put in for a few days south of the Somme.

Orders were issued, the artillery grouped,⁶ and officers sent to reconnoitre, when messages arrived on August 13th delaying the attack for one day,⁷ and next day postponing it indefinitely. Of the reason for this General Monash writes.⁸



It transpired later that General Currie had made very strong private representations to the Fourth Army against the plan. He questioned the wisdom of expending the resources of the Canadian Corps [in an attempt] to repeat, over such broken country, covered as it was with entanglements and other obstacles, the great success of August 8th. He urged that the Canadian Corps should be transferred back to the Arras district—which they knew so well. It was country lending itself admirably to operations requiring careful organisation.

Haig apparently heard unofficially of Currie's views and then invited Rawlinson to state his opinion. On August 14th Rawlinson brought him a letter from Currie, and also air photographs showing the belts of old wire. To have the Canadians back on the front north of Arras suited Haig's plan admirably.⁹ He now decided to limit the Somme attack to a series of set stages and on August 15th, at Foch's Headquarters at Sarcus, thrashed the issue out with him. Stressing his responsibility for the safety of the British Army he told Foch of his scheme

⁶ Railheads for supplies for Aust. Corps were now at Villers-Bretonneux, Corbie, and (for reserve troops) Amiens. Railhead for the right division was being advanced to Guillaucourt.

⁷ Because Gen. Debeney said he could not be ready by the 15th.

⁸ *Australian Victories in France*, p. 141.

⁹ Haig had discussed some of his plans—possibly including this one—not only with Byng and Horne but with Rawlinson, Currie and Monash.

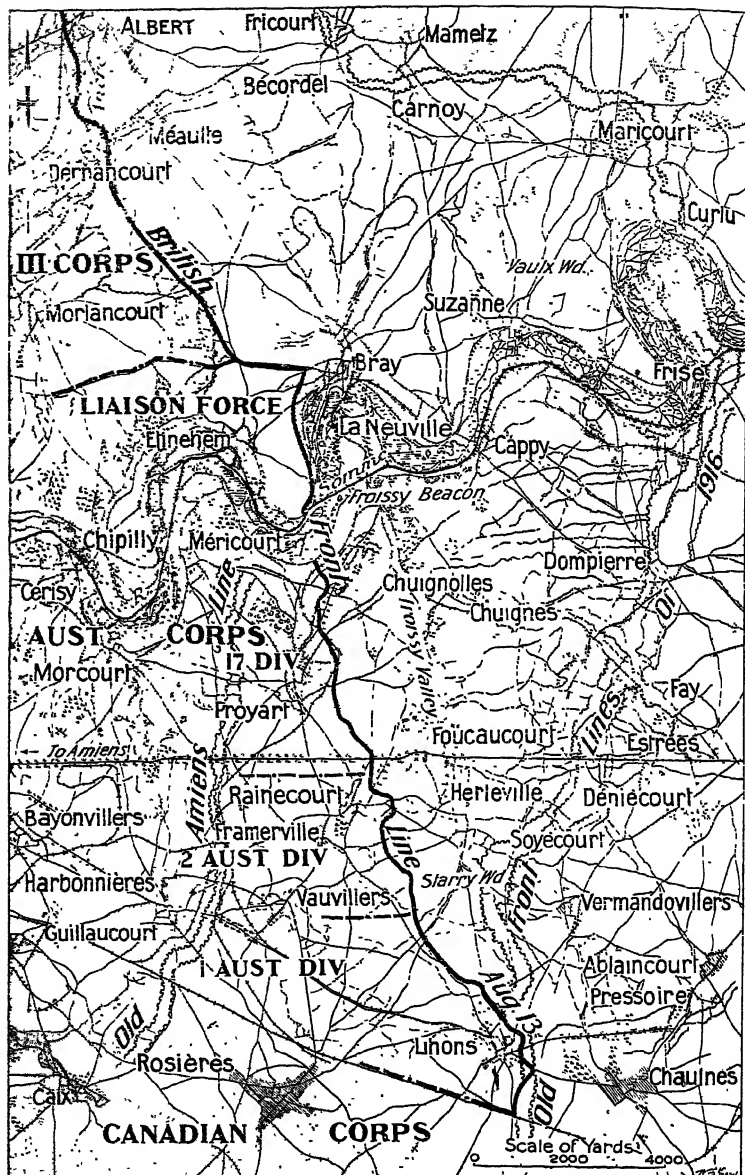
and—though this was probably beyond his rights—that he had given instructions for it to be carried out. News had reached Haig on the previous day that the Germans facing Third Army were retiring. He believed that the withdrawal might be extensive, and had ordered Byng to press on the enemy even before the extra troops had been sent to him. Foch approved, and reversed his attitude as to Fourth Army's rôle, agreeing that it should attack after Third Army, which at first it would support only with its left, north of the Somme.

This decision meant that the Australian front must be re-disposed for a week of waiting. The 4th Division went on and relieved the 1st on August 16th. Two days later the 5th Division relieved the 17th, from the Somme to south of the Roman road. The day after that (August 19th) the 32nd British Division relieved the 2nd (between 4th and 5th). At the same time, the 33rd American Division was called away for intended American operations near Verdun. The Liaison Force had on August 15th been reinforced by a battalion (34th) of the 3rd Division. Third Army's attack had now been fixed for August 21st, and on the previous day the Liaison Force¹⁰ was relieved by the 3rd Division which was to act with III Corps in supporting the offensive.

In this week of waiting the First French Army on August 16th and following days advanced a kilometre or two in all on a seven mile front, Canadian patrols pushing forward on the flank; and on the 18th General Mangin's Tenth Army extended the battle with a sharp stroke on a twelve-mile front north-west of Soissons. On the Australian front, though large operations were barred, all divisions, including the 17th British, used peaceful penetration to force back the outposts of the enemy's forward zone, and brought the front much closer to his real line of resistance, a condition favourable for the coming attack. On the right, at Lihons, the front lay in the network of old trenches—actually along one or other of the old opposing front lines of 1916. North of Lihons it receded rapidly

¹⁰ The 13th Bde. now returned to the 4th Div., setting free the 132nd American Regt. in reserve.

Map No. 2



THE FRONT FROM LIÉONS TO ALBERT AFTER THE BATTLE OF AMIENS.

from them, cutting across the old crater-field through which ran only occasional long communication trenches. North of the Roman road, the old front lines lay still three or four miles ahead, from east of Foucaucourt to east of Frise. Here the Corps had not yet reached the communication trenches; they began on the east side of Froissy valley which itself still lay some distance behind the German outposts. North of the Somme the old front lay near Curlu, four miles beyond Bray, and, though it bent sharply westwards around Maricourt to Fricourt, the III Corps was still four miles short of it.

In the sectors of the 4th and 2nd Divisions peaceful penetration took the form of working up the old trench-lines. The 2nd now held its 3,000 yards' front with one brigade, the 6th, which put three battalions into the line. Their view was, at first, shut out by the northern foot of Lihons hill sloping down between the Rainecourt and Herleville valleys; but on the afternoon of August 12th, hearing that the 11th Battalion was working along the saps farther to the right, Lieuts. Weir and Griffin¹¹ of the 23rd made their way on to this ridge, and from that moment the brigade moved its posts gradually forward until by the 15th, after some sharp bombing up trenches, they reached Hill 90 on the outskirts of the old trench network south of the tumbled mounds of Herleville. A prisoner said that this place was well defended and his division the 109th, expected to be relieved. But farther south during the next two days the northern battalions (13th and 14th) of the 4th Division advanced far up the trenches ahead of them, reaching the edge of Madame Wood,¹² in the old French support line, and, on August 17th, occupying Lihu Farm. The 12th Brigade and Canadians also straightened their line astride the railway. General Monash set for the 2nd Division an objective beyond Herleville to be reached by the same method. On the night of the 16th the 6th Brigade noted abnormal quiet there. Prisoners taken by the Canadians said that their army was preparing to withdraw across the Somme,

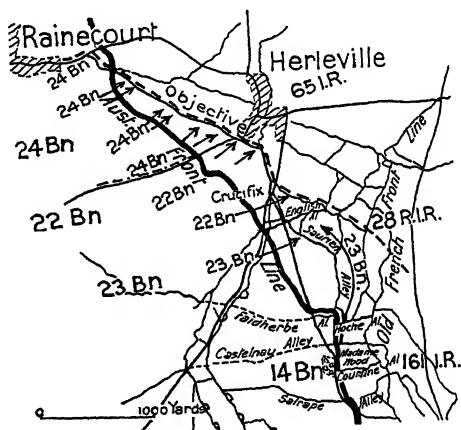
¹¹ Capt. G. W. Griffin, M.C.; 23rd Bn. Accountant; of Hughesdale, Vic.; b. Carlton, Vic.; 19 Nov. 1887.

¹² Called by the Germans "Franzosen Wald." The 1st Division had begun this probing—Lt. P. Binns (Hobart), and Bn., was killed patrolling.

and if attacked strongly even now would make a short preliminary withdrawal. Patrols found the German posts still in Herleville but the higher commanders suspected that it was weakly held and decided to attack it, though with very light forces.

This attack took place on August 18th. The 6th Brigade, after Ville and the gassing at Villers-Bretonneux, was so weak that the centre battalion (22nd) had only three companies of 30, 24, and 36 men respectively to hold 1,000 yards of front, with the fourth com-

pany, some 40 strong, in reserve. The supporting artillery¹³ also was insufficient to cover a continuous front of attack. It was therefore decided that a number of parties should attack the German line at separate points. The right battalion (23rd) managed to seize its right company's objective beforehand by peaceful penetration,¹⁴ and took prisoners showing that a fresh



German division, the 185th, had come in. When the main attack was launched at 4.15 the following morning, a second company of the 23rd seized its objective by bombing north-westwards along the trench thus reached, while a third attacked frontally farther north. The right company of the centre battalion, 22nd, seized the sector north-west of this, though

¹³ Left group—14th (Army) Bde. R.F.A. under Lt.-Col. J. H. Gibbon; right group, 4th and 5th Bdes. A.F.A. under Lt.-Col. H. W. Riggall. The 5th Div.'s artillery had been withdrawn to rest.

¹⁴ On Aug. 17, hearing that a patrol of the 14th Bn. had got into Madame Wood, the commander of the 23rd ordered Capt. R. G. Moss's company to bomb up Castelnau and Faidherbe Alleys into Saurien Alley. The 23rd had 15 casualties including Lt. Weir, mortally wounded. This famous leader had served in the ranks of the 7th Bn. at the Landing and at Lone Pine, where he was wounded. He managed to return to the front at Pozzières by getting Lt. Alec Raws to bring him from the Base as his batman. He later refused a post on the brigade staff.

losing 12 of its 30 men before reaching it;¹⁵ but the company commander, Lieut. McCartin,¹⁶ found the trench to the left still held by Germans. As he ran back over the open to report this he was wounded by shots from near the Crucifix at the cross-roads south of Herleville, which the next company should have seized. Telephoning from Lieut. Braithwaite's (support company) headquarters he asked Lieut.-Col. Wiltshire what he should do. Braithwaite took the transmitter from him. "Look here, Sir, this fellow's dying," he said. "He simply can't go back." Wiltshire at once told McCartin that he was sending up Capt. Sullivan's company of the 21st (our "Brewery" company of *Chapter I*) which had been lent him for reserve; he directed McCartin to come back for medical attention. But McCartin apparently tried to reach his men, and was afterwards found dead. Meanwhile his second in command, Lieut. Speak,¹⁷ also managed to inform Wiltshire through the 23rd Battalion of the position. Sullivan organised a party which, moving round under Lieut. Hardwick through the 23rd's trenches, quickly bombed to the Crucifix capturing six Germans, and reaching the next communication trench in which part of the centre company of the 22nd had been held up.

The centre company under Lieut. Fulton¹⁸ attacked in five sections and, like other troops this day, was fired on almost from the start, but reached the cross-roads, and from the road bank tried to bomb a German machine-gun post in the trench just beyond. Lieuts. Fulton and Evans¹⁹ were wounded and Sergt. Ellis²⁰ killed as he bombed. Lieut. Wood,²¹ following with a machine-gun, rushed it to the bank amid the bombs and opened fire; but a bomb which he caught and tried to

¹⁵ Lt. N. J. Madden was killed by a shell.

¹⁶ Lt. L. A. McCartin, M.C.; 22nd Bn. Draper; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Geelong, 20 Aug. 1894. Killed in action, 18 Aug. 1918. (He was a well known footballer of Geelong and, like Madden, an original private of the 22nd).

¹⁷ Lt. L. R. Speak, 22nd Bn. Clerk; of Elsternwick, Vic.; b. Buninyong, Vic., 5 Mar. 1894.

¹⁸ Lt. C. J. Fulton, M.C., 22nd Bn. Collector; of Hackney, S.A.; b. Cobar, N.S.W., 25 Oct. 1890.

¹⁹ Lt. J. H. Evans, 22nd Bn. Butcher; of Melbourne, b. Cardiff, Wales, 13 July 1883. Died 2 July 1940.

²⁰ Sgt. L. G. Ellis (No. 4002; 22nd Bn.). Contractor; of Grovedale, Vic.; b. Grovedale, 22 May 1893. Killed in action, 18 Aug. 1918.

²¹ Lt. J. R. Wood, D.C.M.; 7th M.G. Coy. Engineer; of Healesville, Vic.; b. Leeds, Eng., 28 Mar. 1894. Died of wounds, 20 Aug. 1918.

return burst in his face, mortally wounding him. The survivors under Lieut. Harold Smith²² withdrew and went on again up the communication trench in which another party had advanced. Their junction with Hardwick's bombing party completed the capture of the southern half of the objective.

North-west of this point the Australian front had not yet reached the trench network and all parties had to advance over the open. Those from the left of the 22nd and right of the 24th attacking the cross-roads south-west of Herleville disappeared. Two runners came back to say the enemy were working round them. German machine-gun bullets kicked dust clouds from the edge of a crater or trench in which some were sheltering. Between 8 and 9 o'clock a party of Germans was seen carrying away a wounded man and driving a dozen prisoners. A week later was found there a wooden cross inscribed in German, "Six Unknown Australians." A quarter of a mile to the north-west a party of the 24th which had reached its objective (the Rainecourt-Vermandovillers road) held on under Private Artis²³ till dusk in a dangerous position and then withdrew. Those farther to the left had already returned. The northern half of the objective remained uncaptured. The 6th Brigade lost 117 officers and men. It took 15 prisoners of the 185th Division.

Records of this division say that it relieved the 109th and the southern part of the 107th on Aug. 16. "Opposite lay the 1st and 2nd Australian divisions, known as *élite* divisions."²⁴ The line of trench and road attacked by the right and centre of the 6th Bde. was part of the main line of its forward zone; the true main line lay half a mile behind Starry Wood. The regiments had increased their depth, each having only one battalion in the line with two of its companies in the true main line and two forward. The successful attack of the 23rd and 22nd Bns. forced the two companies of the 28th R.I.R. out of most of their forward zone, and a third company was brought up. The fighting is described as bitter, the regiment losing 115 officers and men, of whom one officer and 68 men were missing. A counter-attack was ordered but was postponed to allow of more artillery support.

The left of the Australian attack was met by two companies of the 65th I.R. Early that morning preparations were detected, and as soon as the attack started it was opposed by fire of artillery and of

²² Lt. H. Smith, M.C., M.M.; 22nd Bn. Clerk; of Alpheton, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, Vic., 30 Oct. 1893.

²³ Cpl. J. Artis, D.C.M. (No. 4292; 24th Bn.). Blacksmith; of Port Fairy, Vic., b. Port Fairy, 6 Oct. 1898.

²⁴ *History of the 65th I.R.* The history of the 28th R.I.R. calls them "first class attack troops."

the machine-guns disposed chequer-wise about the forward zone. The fate of the Victorians who pressed on into the forward zone was learned after the war, partly from the survivors, partly from the German narratives. After bombing out some small German posts they came under heavy fire and were forced to shelter close to a German machine-gun post in a hedge. The Germans brought up the reserve sections of their forward companies and forced the Victorians from crater to crater. Lieut. Westaway, leading the 22nd, refused to surrender when the Germans called out, but was soon killed by a bomb. After many others had been hit,²⁵ the survivors joined the right party of the 24th under Lieut. Rigby,²⁶ who was waiting for support and fired the S.O.S. signal three times without response.

Eventually a German machine-gun officer, Res.-Lt. Everling, who came up, located Rigby's position, and set two of his guns to keep it under fire while five volunteers crept round in rear of it. To prevent the Australians from suspecting that an assault was imminent the machine-guns continued shooting but fired high, and the volunteers at a signal from Everling bombed and rushed them. The Germans lost in this fight 5 officers and 85 men, but took 25 prisoners and 5 Lewis guns.

That night the 2nd Division was relieved by the 32nd British, the captured trench being handed over to the 2nd Battalion, Manchester Regiment.²⁷ Next morning, after heavy bombardment, the Germans retook it, taking 34 prisoners. The 2nd Manchester organised bombing parties and, helped on the southern flank by some of the 14th Australian Battalion,²⁸ restored the position.

German regimental histories say that an attempt to recover the lost part of Hill 90 was made by the storm sections of the 28th R.I.R. from the front, and the 12th Company of the 65th I.R. from the north, but that it failed on the southern flank.

The front here had been advanced by as much as a mile at one point. North of the Roman road the 17th Division made slight gains,²⁹ and the 5th Division (14th and 15th Brigades), coming in on the night of August 16th, considerably extended

²⁵ A survivor said that C.Q.M.S. E. R. Bregenzer (Camperdown, Vic.) jumped out and tried to "bluff" the enemy to surrender, but was killed.

²⁶ Lt. H. A. Rigby, 24th Bn. Labourer; of Footscray, Vic.; b. Kingston, Tas., 25 June 1881.

²⁷ The 22nd Bn., with 80 rifles, was relieved by the 2/K.O.Y.L.I., over 600 strong.

²⁸ Sgt. W. H. Boyes rallied some of the Manchester, led a counter-attack, and, helped by Australians and British, beat off renewed attempts.

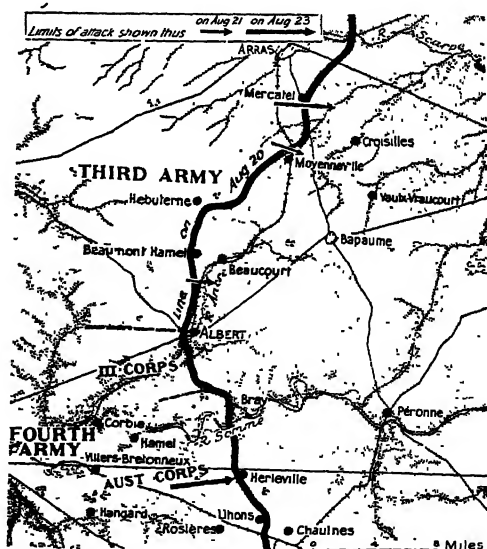
²⁹ It was in the line from Aug. 13 to 16. It pushed forward posts on the left (north of cross-roads on Chuignolles Hill) and right (south-west of Proyart), but the 11/478th I.R. immediately retook the post near Chuignolles cross-roads, capturing several prisoners. On the hill south-east of Proyart the line was advanced, and two attempts by the 232nd R.I.R. to recapture Avenue Cross, held by the 7th E. Yorks. Regt., failed. The 17th Div. had 700 men gassed by a German bombardment on the night of the 14th.

them. On the height north of the Somme more room was gained ahead of Tailles Wood, and on the night of the 18th a post of the 120th I.R. was cleared from north of the Bray-Corbie road.³⁰ Room there was urgently needed for launching the attack by which the 3rd Division was to play its part in the Third Army's offensive.

On August 15th—the day on which he secured Foch's agreement—Haig had issued the final orders for the Third Army's attack. It would begin with a limited thrust on a front of 14,000 yards with the

The attack near Bray

object of seizing the German main line of resistance along the Albert-Arras railway from Beaucourt-sur-Ancre to Moyenneville. Next day the northern part of the Fourth Army, from the Somme to Albert, a front of 12,000 yards, would thrust forward. On the third day the two armies would deliver the main stroke on a front of 33 miles extending from Herleville, 8,000 yards south of the Somme,³¹ to Mercatel, $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles south of Arras. If this succeeded, Third Army would push toward Bapaume, with the Fourth covering its southern flank and the First now joining in to extend the breach northwards beyond the River Scarpe. On August 19th Rawlinson imparted these



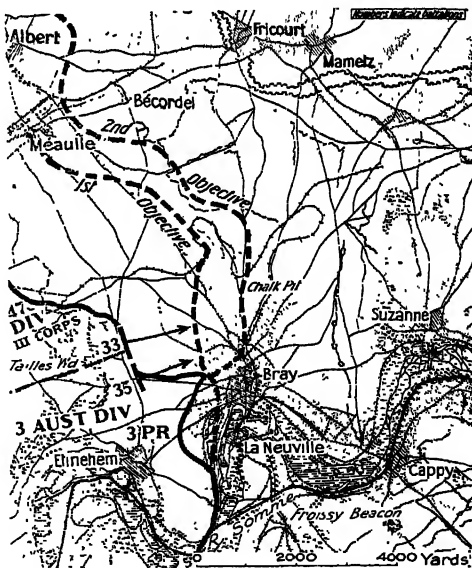
³⁰ By Lt. S. A. Smith (Wyalong, N.S.W.) and scouts of the 34th Bn.

³¹ Haig's Despatches say the attack extended from "our junction with the French north of Lihons" to Mercatel. But on Aug. 23 the junction with the French was still near La Chavette. It was not altered till next day.

plans to Monash. The Australian Corps was not concerned until the second day, August 22nd, when the 3rd Division north of the Somme would swing up its flank together with III Corps. But on the right of the main attack next day the Corps would strike south of the Somme, seize Froissy valley and establish itself on the edge of the plateau beyond.

For the attack on the 22nd Maj.-General Gellibrand (3rd Divn.) would concert his plans with III Corps which would make an important attack with three divisions, 47th, 12th, and 18th. Gellibrand decided to use his three-battalion brigade, the 9th, leaving his two stronger ones fresh for the bigger advances that were expected to follow. Company commanders of the 11th Brigade, which was to go through if opportunity occurred, were warned to take their horses when they moved into support.³²

The III Corps front bent far back and the 3rd Australian Division's sector sharply forward along the plateau from Tailles Wood to the slope above Bray. This village lay in a steep valley which, immediately north, spread out in the shape of a trident. In consequence of the extreme difficulty of arranging for a barrage to cover an advance from the whole of his angular front, Gellibrand decided to attack not Bray itself but an objective north of it; the village would then be taken either by encirclement or, later, by formal attack. In the first instance the 3rd Division would chiefly have to seize the valley



³² Fortunately for the horses this arrangement was afterwards abandoned.

north of the plateau on which the Australian posts lay, and south of the first two prongs of the trident. The attack would be made by two battalions, whose task was greatly simplified by placing them behind the flank of the III Corps, to advance straight down the valley. But as the III Corps troops had 4,000 yards to go and the 3rd Division only 2,000, an intermediate objective was laid down. Here the 47th Division, on the left of the Australians, would halt for a while and then continue with a fresh brigade. The same Australian battalions, 35th and 33rd, would attack side by side in both stages with the 34th in close support, but they would have to wait for an hour at the first objective in the valley to allow the 47th Division to finish its very much longer stage. As the 9th Brigade had only three battalions, the southern half of its front, looking down on the roofs of Bray, was held by the 3rd Pioneer Battalion which, now that reinforcements were low, was increasingly used as infantry. The III Corps would employ tanks and a smoke screen would be provided by including smoke shells in the barrage. The preparations for attack were facilitated by the rapid repair of the main bridge at Cérisy close behind the front.³³

On August 21st the thunder of Third Army's guns was heard to the north. Before noon word arrived that the Germans had been surprised, and about dusk it was heard that the objective had been captured along nearly the whole front;³⁴ 2,000 prisoners had been taken. As a consequence III Corps decided to extend its attack next morning, if possible beyond the original objectives—actually the 47th Division would try to put through its cavalry. Gellibrand ordered his infantry to push on if the 47th succeeded and Bray was clear.

This order, however, was too late to reach most of the

³³ This had been most cleverly done by the 3rd Pion. Bn. There had been two steel bridges side by side, "A" on wooden and "B" on brick abutments. Both had been destroyed; but it was found that, if the damaged part of "A" was cut away it would still be just long enough to place upon the abutments of "B," whose span was about ten feet shorter. (For photograph, see Plate 522, Vol. XII). The top of the abutments was rebuilt. By then the girders were ready for placing on them. The dismantled parts were next reconnected, 3-inch decking brought from Blangy and La Flaque, and the work, begun on Aug. 12, was finished ready for traffic at 4 p.m. on Aug. 18, one day before the time estimated. The winches, tackle, pulley blocks, and wire ropes used were salvaged from the German dump at La Flaque. The rest of the material came from the villages. The Chief Engineer, Fourth Army, Maj.-Gen. R. U. H. Buckland, described the work as "an excellent job."

³⁴ The Arras-Albert railway was nearly everywhere reached and some troops went beyond, but exploitation did not extend the gains to Irlès, as had been hoped. Two New Zealand battalions took part in the first phase.

attacking troops before the start. Zero hour was at dawn, 4.45 a.m. For the sake of simplicity the troops were to assemble on the Méaulte-Etinehem road; the posts on the edge of the valley ahead would be withdrawn just before the barrage fell. The moon was bright, and the officers and scouts laying the tapes just ahead of the road could see the approaching battalions 800 yards away. At 2.30 a.m. a heavy German bombardment descended on the front line and lasted an hour. The left battalion (33rd) was kept as long as possible in the old trenches near Tailles Wood and then sent to the tapes in extended order. The bombardment came down again at 4 a.m., but the 33rd assembled in time with only 20 casualties; and south of it the 35th had only 6 men hit, though shells burst on the road and earth was constantly showered on the troops as they lay.³⁵ The leading battalions of the 11th Brigade, however, coming up shortly afterwards to the support position behind the road lost 6 officers and about 60 men there.³⁶

The creeping barrage³⁷ of the field artillery which fell at 4.45, 300 yards ahead, was good but, inevitably in such broken country, seemed rather ragged. The German counter barrage fell within two minutes, but the attacking troops had then got clear. The morning mist was just appearing and with the dust whipped from the dry ground, and the smoke of phosphorus and high explosive, it filled the valley with haze so dense that the men could barely see ten yards. A few German machine-gun posts fired till the troops were around them. On reaching the bottom of the valley the 33rd met several of them in a strong position but quickly outflanked and subdued them—it was found that headquarters of the forward battalion of the 124th I.R., with commander, staff, *liaison* officers, 40 men and 4 machine-guns had been captured. Gellibrand notes that when examined they "could speak of nothing but the rapidity with which our men were on them and round their machine-

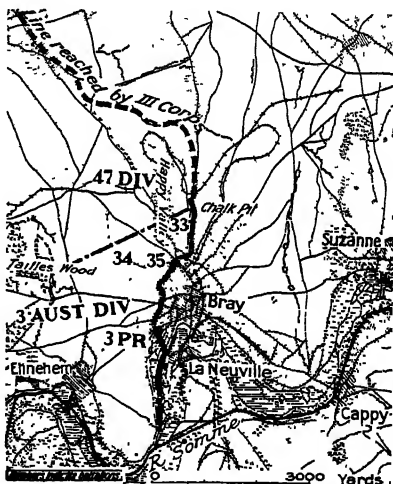
³⁵ In front of the 33rd a German post sent up the signal for its artillery to lengthen range, which greatly to the relief of the 33rd, the German artillery did. Some of the 3rd Div.'s machine-gunners who were to move in rear of the left flank to protect it (as was part of the light trench-mortar battery) suffered casualties in this shelling.

³⁶ The 43rd this day lost 4 officers and 45 others, the 44th—2 officers and 28. Lt. A. Roger (Victoria Park, W.A.) of the 44th was killed.

³⁷ Laid down by the artillery of the 3rd Aust. and 58th Divs. The rate of its advance was slow, 100 yards in four minutes. Its southern limit was 200 yards north of the Bray-Corbie road as posts of the 3rd Pioneer lay along the south of the road. Much smoke shell was therefore used there.

guns." The 35th was fired on from a copse on the edge of the plateau on its right but also quickly passed round it, taking 50 prisoners. The Australian flank was ahead of the 47th Division, and a German officer with 14 men from the British front pluckily attacked the flank from the rear; some of the 33rd turned about and killed or captured his whole party.

There followed the long necessary wait of sixty-six minutes on the first objective, where a spur from the left ran down into the valley. The light became clear, and twenty minutes before the time for going on the German artillery shelled the valley with gas.³⁸ Masks were put on, and not till they had advanced for ten minutes in the second phase could the troops reach air clean enough to allow their removal. Colonel White of the 35th afterwards said that this, together with the long wait and the slow pace of the barrage, took the sting out of the attack and gave many Germans time to retire and establish themselves on the hill beyond Bray. Except at an old prisoners of war compound near the town few stayed to meet the attack. On the right of the 35th in this stage two companies of the 3rd Pioneers advanced down the steep open slopes³⁹ to the edge of Bray. The village was



evidently held by machine-gunners. A number of pioneers were hit,⁴⁰ and the posts established by the 35th and 33rd north of the town were continually harassed. Nevertheless a string of posts was placed reaching from the Somme bank around the west and north of the village and up the spur between the second and third prongs of the trident. On the left where a

³⁸ It had a pink hue and was said to be Austrian.

³⁹ Plate 525, Vol. XII, shows them digging after this advance.

⁴⁰ Lt. J. McConnell (Galashiels, Scotland, and Melbourne) was killed there.

very steep gully—"Happy Valley"—had to be crossed the 22nd London Regiment was slower,⁴¹ but its flank company under Capt. Oakley⁴² came on fast with the flank of the 33rd, with whose left company under Major Brodziak it dug itself in near a chalk quarry on the ridge. At Happy Valley the Germans resisted the Londoners, but one of the 47th Division's tanks entered the gully from the south followed by the headquarters officers of the 22nd London and the Australian *liaison* officer and his two orderlies, ten in all, and seized the southern part. A hundred Germans at the northern end were then kept under fire until captured by the 23rd London.

III Corps seized most of its objective, though with weak forces; but the two squadrons of 1/1st Northumberland Hussars, that tried to break through from the head of Happy Valley as soon as the protecting barrage ceased, were met with heavy machine-gun fire; a few survivors and many riderless horses galloping back along the ridge north of the Australian position, and a few others down the road towards Bray, cut to pieces by the machine-gunners there, exhibited to thousands of onlookers the stupidity of those who had ordered this impossible attempt.⁴³

However the objective had been gained. Generals Monash and Gellibrand were now anxious to have parties pushed out farther to surround Bray, but Colonel White and Brig.-Genl. Goddard's brigade major, J. H. F. Pain, knowing the strength of the machine-gun fire from Bray which by 8.30 stopped all movement of patrols and others near the place, stood stubbornly against it. The generals therefore decided to leave it to be taken later.

So under the broiling sun of one of the hottest summer days experienced by them in France, the 35th and 33rd dug in, with the 34th at the mouth of Happy Valley behind them. South of Bray the pioneers, by means of a small punt, ferried their patrols across the Somme and explored the low peninsula, but could not enter the village. The higher staffs busied them-

⁴¹ In the 142nd Bde. (47th Div.) which had passed through the 140th at the first objective some of the troops in touch with the Australians were uncertain whether or not they were to leap-frog at the first objective.

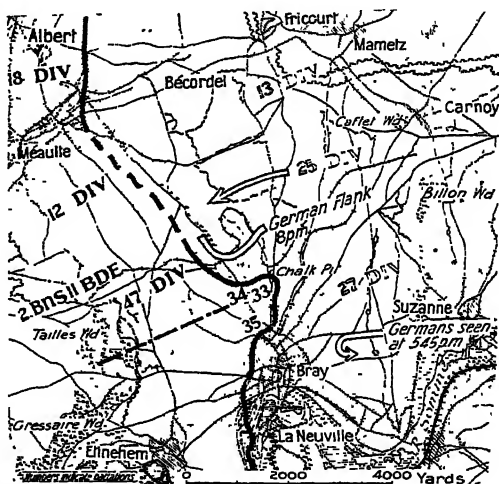
⁴² Capt. C. H. Oakley, M.C.; 22nd Bn., The London Regt. Killed in action, 2 Sep. 1918.

⁴³ A squadron of the 13th Light Horse Regt. was brought to Gressaire Wood but no farther. (See Vol. XII, Plate 523).

selves with plans for continuing the attack next day as part of the offensive then to be launched on a grand scale both north and south. General Monash, also, decided to increase the scope of his next day's assault south of the Somme by attacking the bare, massive triangle of Froissy Beacon, that frowned at Bray across the river.

At 1.15, however, observers on the slopes above Bray and elsewhere noticed numbers of German troops pouring in lines and groups out of Caftet Wood, near Carnoy, opposite the centre of the new III Corps front.⁴⁴ Yet no sign of actual counter-attack disturbed that broiling afternoon until the posts of the 33rd Battalion (and with them Oakley's company of the Londons) observ-

ed the British posts north of them retiring across Happy Valley. German infantry followed, the 33rd and Oakley's company pouring into them the fire of every available weapon, but especially of German rifles, machine-guns and trench-mortars which the men were delighted to



use, saving their own ammunition. The Germans within effective range were stopped, but those beyond followed the British back out of sight, in some places to the starting line of that morning's attack. The commander of the 22nd London, Lieut.-Col. Pargiter,⁴⁵ eventually came across and placed himself and

⁴⁴ Lt.-Col. Morshead, 33rd Bn., informed 9th Bde. H.Q. of this at 1.20 p.m. At 1.30 a British airman saw the movement and fired a signal after which the British artillery opened. The commander of the 142nd Bde. asked for a barrage beyond the final objective but was told this could not be given as ammunition was not up.

⁴⁵ Lt.-Col. L. L. Pargiter, D.S.O.; Middlesex Regt. Commanded 22nd Bn. London Regt., July-Sep. 1918, 24th Bn., Oct.-Dec. 1918; b. Multan, Punjab, India, 3 May 1885.

the remnant of his battalion under Lieut.-Col. Morshead of the 33rd. The commanders of the two support companies of the 33rd, Capt. Doig and Prior,⁴⁶ had previously brought their troops close up behind the front line, and now one company moved to the flank, facing north. Capt. Cains's company of the 34th⁴⁷ rallied a score of Londoners, and, seeing the Germans appear over the knuckle west of Happy Valley, advanced northward astride the Méaulte road. Fire from these troops stopped this enemy, who clustered in Happy Valley where Cains's company—its own ammunition nearly spent, but using German rifles and three captured machine-guns—could not trouble them. Two other companies of the 34th came in on Cains's flanks; the extreme left was in touch with part of the 47th Division, a quarter of a mile behind the first objective. Four Australian machine-guns covered the ground from the plateau west of Bray, and Capt. Whitehead,⁴⁸ working with Maj. Pain, now obtained eight more. A company of the 34th was still in close reserve. East of Bray at about 6 p.m. Germans, estimated at two battalions, came over the hill from Suzanne. Artillery and machine-guns at long range were turned on them; the leading waves took shelter and the rest fell back.

The 9th Brigade, among whose posts were perhaps 100 of the 22nd London, was now holding its complete objective, theoretically an impossible position squeezed between Bray and the heights to the north, but held by confident men.⁴⁹ Brodziak at the dangerous angle, with his own company (2 officers and 31 men) and Oakley's, reported, "Position not a good one, but can't leave it." The 47th Division with whom Gellibrand and his staff were in touch till late at night stated at 11.20 that their troops were too disorganised to attempt to regain the ground until the following afternoon but the first objective would be held by their reserve brigade. Gellibrand had already moved the 43rd and 44th Battalions of his 11th

⁴⁶ Brig. C. E. Prior, 33rd Bn.; commanded 2nd/1st M.G. Bn., A.I.F. 1939-40; D.A.G., A.I.F., 1941. Duntroon graduate; of Manly, N.S.W.; b. Burrowa, N.S.W., 19 Aug. 1895.

⁴⁷ The company now comprised only 40 rifles.

⁴⁸ Lt.-Col. D. A. Whitehead, M.C. Commanded 23rd M.G. Coy. 1917-18; Adj. 3rd M.G. Bn., Aug.-Dec. 1918; commands 2nd/2nd M.G. Bn., A.I.F., 1940. Duntroon graduate; of Mosman, N.S.W., b. Leith, Scotland, 30 Sep. 1896.

⁴⁹ One message received at Div. H.Q. by pigeon at 6.10 had said: "send up reinforcements. Am surrounded on left flank and enfiladed by machine-guns. Very urgent." But Br.-Gen. Goddard's H.Q. considered this unduly alarmist.

Brigade into the line from which the 47th Division had started, but at 10 p.m. troops of the 47th arrived there and the Australians were withdrawn. At dawn next morning Brodziak, who was wounded but stayed at his post, reported: "the left flank is quite secure." But the plan of continuing the advance on the 23rd had been cancelled. At 6.10 p.m. Monash had passed on an order from Rawlinson that the 3rd Division must not attack the spur beyond Bray till the 47th came up.

In this attack the 9th Brigade had 20 officers and 354 others hit.⁵⁰ It captured 13 officers and 245 men, mainly of the 27th (Württemberg) Division.

German records show that the front attacked by the 3rd Divn. was still held by the remnants of the 27th Divn., but its southern flank had been reinforced by survivors of the 43rd Reserve. North, in front of III Corps were still the 54th (Württemberg) Res. Divn. and the 233rd at Albert—all having taken part in the fighting of Aug. 8 and still forming the right of the German Second Army.

Apparently, on Aug. 13 Second Army ordered that the main line of resistance must be the existing front, and all forces must be used to maintain it. But, in view of Ludendorff's order that a withdrawal to the Somme must be prepared for,⁵¹ other positions were to be reconnoitred behind it.

On Aug. 21, when the Third British Army attacked the Seventeenth German, it became clear that Second Army also might be forced back. That army issued a map showing six successive lines, largely along the old fronts of 1916. The present front was marked H.W.L.I.,⁵² and the others H.W.L. II to VI, the last running partly along the eastern bank of the Somme south of Péronne. H.W.L. II was now to be occupied at once by reserve troops. North of the Somme the 54th Corps ordered the first main line of resistance to be withdrawn to behind Bray, and the zone forward of this to be held only lightly. After Aug. 21 an attack in this sector was expected, and (according to a captured trench-mortar officer) an Australian prisoner about Aug. 20th had given information of it.

But the order for withdrawal at Bray was not fully carried out. The 124th I.R., holding the valley, sent back its trench-mortars and heavy machine-guns, but the infantry stayed, and the whole forward battalion and a company of the supporting one were captured.⁵³ The rest of the support battalion managed during a thickening of the mist to withdraw to a big engineer dump in the valley behind Bray. The withdrawn machine-gunners helped to shoot down the cavalry and appropriated several riderless horses.

⁵⁰ The 33rd Bn. lost 8 officers and 95 others; 35th—5 and 116; 34th—3 and 71; 3rd Pioneers—4 and 49; 3rd M.G. Coy—23 other ranks. In the 33rd Capt. T. W. Tollis (Rockdale, N.S.W.), commanding the right company and Lt. Alfred G. Varley (Arnccliffe, N.S.W.) were killed, and in the 35th Lt. S.A. Ades (Sydney).

⁵¹ See p. 663.

⁵² *Hauptwiderstandslinie*—Main Line of Resistance.

⁵³ This company was attacked by the tank at Happy Valley.

To the north, behind the 54th Res. Divn., lay the 225th Divn., held for counter-attack. Its leading regiment, 116th, at Carnoy was ordered to counter-attack at once, but at this stage news of the spectacular repulse of the cavalry reached 54th Corps. It immediately ordered the whole 225th Divn. to profit by this "moment of enemy weakness" and drive the British back over their start line towards Morlancourt.

The moment of weakness had passed six hours before these troops could be brought up, but their centre reached the German main line held that morning. On the left, however, the III/117th I.R. was held up after taking 100 prisoners. The 13th Divn. and 123rd I.R. (27th Divn.) were to have advanced on the northern and southern flanks respectively, but the 13th was too worn out for the attempt, and the 123rd made little headway.

Thus when the day for Haig's big attack, August 23rd, dawned the III Corps was in a different situation from that intended.⁵⁴ Although it had taken Albert and more than 2,000 prisoners, Rawlinson had to abandon his plan for a general advance from that sector, and the day's offensive therefore comprised two separate advances—by the Third Army supported by the extreme left flank of the Fourth, aiming at Bapaume, and by the Australian Corps south of the Somme to reach the plateau beyond Froissy valley.

The southern attack was made by only two divisions of the four holding the Australian Corps front. During the past fortnight the Corps had expanded to the size of an army, comprising (if the Liaison Force is counted) four divisions in line and three in support. At this juncture, though the Liaison Force was gone, it actually held eight: Third Army having struck, the Canadian Corps could be safely transferred from the Somme,⁵⁵ and, on the departure of Sir Arthur Currie on August 22nd, the 4th Canadian Division in line and the 1st behind it came temporarily under Monash. For a day and a half, the Corps held a front of 30,000 yards (17 miles).⁵⁶

The attack was to be made by the two divisions south of the Somme, 32nd British and 1st Australian. The 32nd had to capture Herleville, involving an advance of 400 yards on the right and a mile on the left on a front of 2,000 yards. The

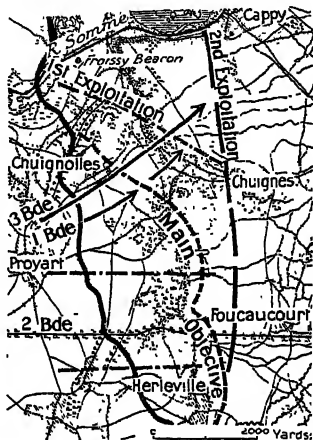
⁵⁴ Third Army also had stood still on the 22nd, Gen. Byng, much against Haig's inclination, having used that day in reorganising for next day's attack.

⁵⁵ Its earlier departure would have shown that the offensive was being relaxed there.

⁵⁶ By the irony of events Gen. Monash, commanding an army corps, constantly controlled more troops and far more important operations than did his predecessor, Gen. Birdwood, now raised to command an army.

throughout, the others moving up in close support or reserve. At the top of the eastern slope lay the trenches of the old French reserve lines, with the old wire still ahead of them. To avoid the possibility of the troops having to cross this wire under machine-gun fire, Monash changed his plan so as to place the objective for the formal advance behind it.⁵⁷ The general rate of advance of the barrage would be 100 yards in three minutes.⁵⁸ Smoke screens would shut out Froissy Beacon and also the heights north of it beyond the Somme,⁵⁹ and to screen tanks and infantry during the advance there would be ten per cent of smoke shell in the barrage.

When Monash resolved to seize on the same day the Froissy plateau, he and Maj.-General Glasgow decided to carry this out with the 3rd Brigade moving through on the northern flank shortly after the main attack. But there was to be an interval in which the 1st Brigade would follow up its formal attack by stealing, if possible, another 1,000 yards, and so gaining a foothold at the steep south-western corner of Froissy plateau. The 3rd Brigade would pass through and



⁵⁷ This change brought immediate protest from Br.-Gen. Heane of the 2nd Bde. who said—rightly, as events proved—that the gully's edge could be made untenable by the Germans shelling the valley and woods behind it with gas. Monash accordingly authorised Heane to extend his hold by exploitation, if possible, after the barrage ended.

⁵⁸ The first three lifts would be quicker, 100 yards in 2 minutes.

⁵⁹ The artillery acting directly under the artillery commander of the corps (Br.-Gen. Coxen) comprised the following:

Under 1st Aust. Div. (Br.-Gen. S. M. Anderson)—nine brigades as follows: Right Group (Lt.-Col. H. W. Lloyd) 12th Army Bde. A.F.A., 23rd Army Bde., R.F.A., and 1st and 2nd Bdes. A.F.A. Left Group (Lt.-Col. H. O. Caddy) 13th and 14th Bdes., A.F.A., 16th and 5th Army Bdes. R.H.A. 29th Army Bde. R.F.A. (the last two forming a left sub-group under Lt.-Col. A. H. D. West, R.H.A.)

Under 32nd Div. (Br.-Gen. J. A. Tyler)—six brigades: Right Group (Lt.-Col. Lord Wynford) 161st and 189th Bdes., R.F.A. Centre Group (Lt.-Col. H. W. Riggall) 5th and 4th Bdes., A.F.A. Left Group (Lt.-Col. C.R.B. Carrington) 14th Army and 168th Bdes., R.F.A.

The artillery of the 4th Div. (10th and 11th Bdes. and 3rd and 6th Army Bdes., A.F.A.) and 3rd Div. (7th and 8th Bdes., A.F.A. and 58th Div. Art.) were independently commanded during the action.

seize the rest. At the last moment it was decided that both these operations, like the first, would be covered by creeping barrages.

The two brigades of the 1st Division allotted for the first attack marched up from their rest positions near Corbie on the night of August 21st and took over from the rear units of the 5th Division the support positions, then in the old Amiens line from Méricourt to the Roman road. On the night of the 22nd they advanced to their starting positions, those of the actual attacking battalions being along a line taped behind the outposts, while the support battalions started at varying distances behind them. The tank force—three composite companies from the much used 8th, 13th, and 2nd Tank Battalions—was forced to scamp the overhaul of its machines, and came up cautiously between dark (9.30 p.m.) and 1 a.m., using the methods of Hamel and August 8th.⁶⁰ As before August 8th, tank officers had come up and lived with the battalions. Every tank carried an infantry scout. In the grey of dawn on August 23rd all 36 tanks were arriving close behind the waiting infantry when at 4.45 the tremendous barrage fell. The last patrols and outposts of the 5th Division screening the assembled troops had been withdrawn fifteen minutes before.⁶¹

This attack, south of the Somme, though delivered by only two divisions, was one of the hardest blows ever struck by Australian troops. To describe it from the

The attack

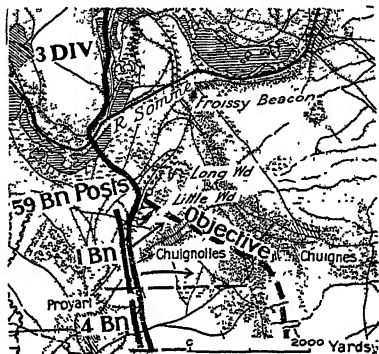
north southwards—although other battalions started on fronts of about 1,000 yards, the left battalion (1st) of the 1st Brigade assembled on a front of 1,500 and had to establish a diagonal line 3,000 yards long, forming the northern flank, mainly along the valley. On the right, where the troops were eventually to climb the far side of the valley, the 1st Battalion was reinforced by an attached company of the 3rd,

⁶⁰ The first part of the approach, as far as Morcourt gully, was carried out by most tanks on the night of the 21st, but Maj. H. R. Pape's composite company, 13th Tank Bn. (supporting the 2nd Aust. Inf. Bde.) was allowed to go straight up from Cérisy valley on the final night. The last part of this journey to the "tank start-line," 1,000 yards behind the front was made with engines throttled down. At 4.30 the tanks moved towards the front. To drown the noise aeroplanes flew over during all these movements.

⁶¹ Owing to the irregularity of the front, the tape line had to be drawn in many parts a quarter of a mile behind the outposts.

which would pass through at that stage. On the left in the first advance the Somme flats, and Luc Wood on the slope leading down to them, were not to be attacked.⁶²

When the barrage fell Capt. Withy's⁶³ company of the 1st, forming the left flank of the attack, made along the spur north-west of Chuignolles, led by two tanks at a great pace. Most of the German outposts, met at a few hundred yards' distance, fled but halted and surrendered after a few shots had been fired at them. The left platoon had the hardest fighting since, though it rushed the nearest strong-point, the Germans farther down the slope towards the Somme kept it under heavy fire. The 59th Battalion (5th Divn.) was still holding a few posts north of the front of attack, and gave most valuable help by sending a platoon under



Lieut. McKay to rush a strong German post there simultaneously with the 1st Battalion's advance. Covered by the barrage which extended to the Somme, this party seized the post, killing 7 Germans and capturing 13 and 2 machine-guns. But the field-guns only protected each part of the attacking line for fifteen minutes after it reached its objective, and Germans in Luc Wood, farther on, maintained severe fire, shooting a number of the 1st as they dug in.⁶⁴

The centre company of the 1st under Capt. Steen⁶⁵ similarly fought its way down the knuckle south of Chuignolles following a tank along the spur south of the village. This tank and one firing from the spur north of the village routed

⁶² The plans concerning the exploitation stage, in which this wood was to be seized, were twice altered on Aug. 22 owing to changes of plan in the operations north of the river, but this was their final effect.

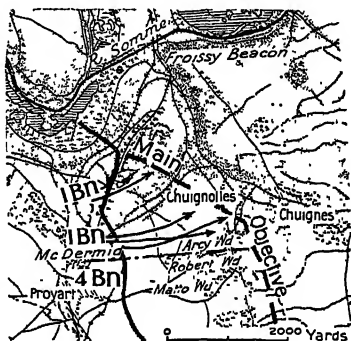
⁶³ Lt.-Col. C. B. Withy, D.S.O., M.C., 1st Bn.; and 2nd/25th Bn., A.I.F., 1940; Cadet draughtsman; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. St. Leonards, N.S.W., 30 Jan. 1893.

⁶⁴ Lt. W. V. Fowler, (Randwick, N.S.W. and Melbourne) and two N.C.O's were wounded at this stage.

⁶⁵ Capt. G. Steen, 1st Bn. Civil servant; of Annandale, N.S.W.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 2 Sep. 1888.

the enemy out of it. Parties of infantry worked through the back gardens, avoiding the main street till later, when a small party of Withy's company working backwards cleared the place from the eastern end.⁶⁶

South of this came the right company of the 1st, followed by the attached company of the 3rd under Capt. McDermid. McDermid felt that the troops ahead of him were following the tanks at too great a distance, allowing German machine-gunners to reopen fire after these had passed.⁶⁷ He accordingly pushed through into the valley. From a copse in it (one of the Arcy Woods) to his right front, ran a number of Germans. The company passed north of it, the Germans ahead fleeing up the farther slope with the barrage bursting over their backs. As this was the line on which now (at 5.33), three-quarters of an hour after the start, the barrage was to remain for fifteen minutes, McDermid withdrew his company north of the little wood and waited for the guns to lift. South of him the 4th Battalion on a narrower front, with two companies attacking and two supporting, was faced by Robert and Matto Woods on the valley's edge. The position seemed strong and many Germans were there, but as soon as tanks or infantry passed their flanks they surrendered.⁶⁸ The infantry followed the barrage closely to the objective, the tanks roving about and their commanders constantly asking the com-



⁶⁶ Chuignolles village and the valley beyond are shown in *Vol. XII, Plates 528-9*. The party that cleared it was under L.-Cpl. E. A. J. Davis (Arncliffe, N.S.W.). Sgt. N. H. Osmand (Albury, N.S.W.), going along the main street, had a tussle with four Germans of whom he killed two and wounded one. The other escaped. (He had already been wounded twice in Gallipoli and on three occasions in France, and suffered a further wound in the battalion's last fight, on Sep. 18.)

⁶⁷ Lt. D. J. Burrin (Terramungamine, Dubbo, N.S.W.) of this company had been killed early in the advance through getting into the Australian barrage.

⁶⁸ In one wood L.-Cpl. J. G. Budge ("Glen Ewan," Wauchope, N.S.W.) with a Lewis gun outflanked them. Those in Robert Wood continued to fire into McDermid's rear and a few of the 3rd, sent back to mop up, captured 20 in a dugout.

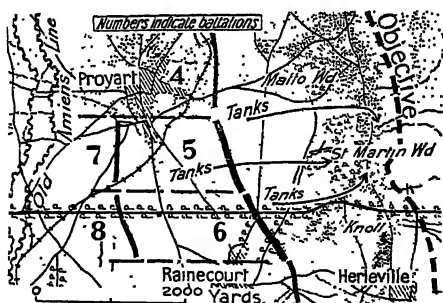
pany commanders⁶⁹ for fresh tasks. In the valley the 4th also waited for the barrage to lift.

The 2nd Brigade, attacking astride the Roman road, had the heaviest task that morning. Along the whole front of its left battalion, the 5th, the slope to the valley was covered by St. Martin's Wood,⁷⁰ three-quarters of a mile wide and in parts a mile deep. The right battalion was faced by smaller scattered woods and by two valleys (Rainecourt and Herleville gullies) into which the main valley here split, and the knoll between them at the Roman road. It had been arranged that, of the brigade's twelve tanks, two should work round the northern edge of St. Martin's Wood, four would go through it, and two, from the southern battalion's front, round its southern edge; the tanks passing round the wood were, if possible, to cut off the enemy in it.

The 2nd Brigade had assembled with its support battalions, 8th and 7th, nearly a mile behind the attacking ones, the 6th and 5th, it having been noted that the German artillery constantly laid its barrage on the plateau between. Several times in the night, between 2

and 4 a.m., the German outpost screen about the Roman road had fired flares bringing down this barrage; and at dawn, several minutes before the Australian barrage fell, the posts west of St. Martin's Wood did the same. It was guessed

that they had heard the tanks. These barrages descended behind the 5th Battalion but caught the rear of the 6th, and the two support battalions had to move through a curtain of shell-fire which had increased when the attack was launched.⁷¹



⁶⁹ Capt. D. W. Isaacs (Sydney) and Lt. A. L. Malone (Narrabri, N.S.W.; died 7 Nov. 1938). Many Germans were captured in a sunken road leading to the valley.

⁷⁰ Known to the Germans as the "Bayernwald," "Bavarian Wood."

⁷¹ In the left support company of the 6th all officers except Lt. L. S. Cuzens (Warrnambool, Vic.) were hit.

The platoon commanders tried to pick the gaps between the shells, but in that area dust and smoke were so thick that men could see only some 100 yards. Yet they came steadily through with about 40 casualties.⁷² Several tanks here were hit or broke down; others did not catch up the line till it had gone some distance. On the left of the 5th, when machine-guns fired, single men were twice seen to run straight out, fifty yards, chancing everything, and kill the gunners.⁷³ Capt. Burke, who had begged not to be left out of this fight, ran from place to place, keeping the advance rolling, until he was killed by a chance shell of the supporting artillery. But it was not till half a mile from the start that the wood loomed clearly out of the smoke, and the real resistance began. In front of the first outlying copse Capt. O'Sullivan⁷⁴ of the right support company was killed. Stokes mortars under Lieut. Darling⁷⁵ were with the advancing troops, and at several points they suppressed machine-guns.

But now the tanks were the chief help. Their officers afterwards reported that St. Martin's Wood was very strongly held and that the German machine-gunners there fought with great bravery. Lieut. Ribchester⁷⁶ says that his tank found about twenty machine-guns on 100 yards' front and only "after a desperate fight" could he destroy them or drive off the crews. One or two tanks headed into the middle of the wood along a field-tramway. Farther north the left company of the 5th went straight in. The right company and part of the 6th entered at the southern edge and pushed through towards the left. In the wood the tanks could not keep pace and the support battalions streaming in rounded up, for hours to come, scores of Germans who remained there. During the fifteen minutes' halt, which took place in the wood, a man of the 7th played a piano found in a hut in one of the glades. At the edge of the wood and elsewhere anti-tank field-guns

⁷² The German barrage was 300 yards deep. The 8th Bn. had about 30 men hit (Capt. G. E. Johnston, of Colac, Vic., killed) and the 7th nine.

⁷³ Sgt. H. Kelly (East Richmond, Vic.) thus captured two machine-guns and Cpl. W. Moore (Rockhampton, Q'land) captured one.

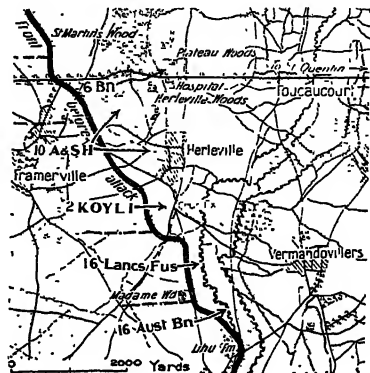
⁷⁴ Capt. B. M. O'Sullivan, 5th Bn. Medical student; of Richmond, Vic.; b. Yarrowonga, Vic., 23 Sep. 1894. Died of wounds, 23 Aug. 1918.

⁷⁵ Lt. J. W. Darling, M.C., 2nd A.L.T.M. Bty. Grazier; of Glenaroua district, Vic.; b. Hawthorn, Vic., 12 July 1894.

⁷⁶ Lt. W. A. Ribchester, 13th Tank Bn.

were passed. They had been useless in the smoke and most of the crews had fled.⁷⁷

The 6th Battalion, which should have been mainly south of the Roman road, headed too far north, attacking the southern end of St. Martin's Wood and the knoll between the valleys at the Roman road. Its right did not sweep clean St. Denis Wood, in which 80 Germans were only subdued when a tank circled it under intense fire⁷⁸ and the 8th Battalion came up. The 6th met intense fire from the copses known as "Herleville Woods" on the eastern side of the knoll; from two small woods—Plateau Woods North and South—on



the level crest beyond the second gully; and from a hutted hospital south of the road where it climbed from that gully. The troops could hear heavy firing 1,200 yards up this gully, in Herleville, which the 10th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, forming the left of the 32nd Division, were then clearing.⁷⁹

The 32nd Division's left brigade (97th) had attacked Herleville with two battalions. The men of the right one, 2nd K.O.Y.L.I., when lying on their starting tapes could see in the bright moonlight the trees at the Crucifix and village, their objective.⁸⁰ They took it with slight loss, but the Highlanders, who had farther to go, found, like the Australians, stubborn resistance in the woods in Herleville gully south of the Roman road. Of the Highlanders' left nothing could at first be heard. Farthest south, in the subsidiary advance, where the front was already

⁷⁷ At the southern end of St. Martin's Wood a gun fired, but one of the shells hit the ground fifty yards from the muzzle.

⁷⁸ Its sides were pitted with bright new bullet marks.

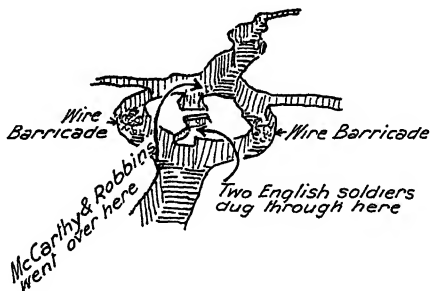
⁷⁹ Headquarters of the 6th Bn. in the chalk pit on the knoll found itself sniped from the rear. A runner Pte. R. C. Knappe (Burnley, Vic.) and L.-Cpl. G. Spreadborough (Melbourne) crossed the Roman road, got behind these Germans, and, after shooting 5, brought in 7 including an officer.

⁸⁰ They could also hear the tanks approaching.

in the old trench network, the 16th Lancashire Fusiliers (96th Bde.) seized the German front line facing its left but could not get in on the right; the bombing party of the 16th Australian Battalion under Lieut. Garratt, which worked up Courtine Alley and Trench to join the Fusiliers' flank, was met with a stick-bomb flying over from the trench where that flank should have been. Courtine Trench here branched around an "island," but both branches were blocked with wire. Bombing across the "island" Garratt, Sergt. Robbins,⁸¹ and their men began a long fight with the enemy beyond.

Although it anticipates the day's events, the remarkable outcome of this fight may be told here. After an hour's bombing

Garratt had gone back for more grenades
McCarthy when the company commander, Lieut. McCarthy,⁸² came up to see what was wrong. When told that the bomb supply of two companies was nearly spent he said there was only one thing to do—to charge the obstacle. Although the Germans had set up a machine-gun almost enfilading the Australian trench, and looking over the block McCarthy could see several other posts within fifty yards, he and Sergt. Robbins scrambled quickly round the block into the sap beyond, and two British soldiers (sergeant and private⁸³) leapt over into a hole from which they could tunnel beneath the block and open up communication behind the two Australians. Meanwhile



McCarthy with Robbins went on, shot a sentry at a trench junction beyond, and taking the risk that Germans would come in there behind him, pushed on. Round a bend McCarthy came on the machine-gunners firing at the Australians farther back. He shot them, and around another bend found himself looking

⁸¹ Sgt. F. J. Robbins, D.C.M., M.M., (No. 1807; 16th Bn.) Locomotive cleaner; of Murray Bridge, S.A.; b. Prospect, S.A., 27 June 1887.

⁸² Lt. L. D. McCarthy, V.C., 16th Bn. Contractor; of Lion Mill (now Mt. Helena), W.A.; b. York, W.A., 21 Jan. 1892.

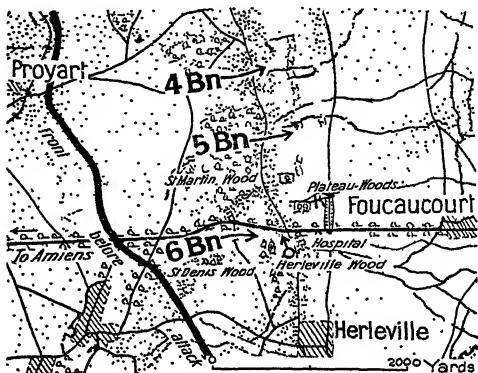
⁸³ From the *liaison* party attached to the 16th's flank.

on the back of a German officer who was waving his arms at a crowd of men scuffling in all directions. McCarthy shot the officer, and the men bolted into a short, narrow sap on the right. Into this McCarthy and Robbins threw the last of their nine Mills bombs and then showered German ones. Just then the two British soldiers arrived, having dug their tunnel. The Germans' heads were being kept down by Lewis guns. Presently a bloodstained handkerchief waved from the sap; 40 Germans came in as prisoners; 15 more had been killed. Robbins, with two Lewis gun crews, was sent along the trench to the neighbourhood of a group of huts in the old No-Man's Land, and from there Lieut. Garratt walked across to meet the Fusiliers whom he could see coming up trenches on the northern flank. McCarthy by his personal action had seized 500 yards of German front, an achievement which, next to that of Lieut. Jacka at Pozières, was perhaps the most effective feat of individual fighting in the history of the A.I.F.; 700 yards of captured trench were handed over to the British.⁸⁴

Long before this in the central sector the pause of the artillery came to an end, at 5.48, and the 2nd Brigade and the right of the 1st moved on to scale the eastern slopes of Froissy valley. The 5th Battalion and the left of the 6th, which had been waiting in St. Martin's Wood for the barrage, now pushed on to the edge of the wood which here clothed the valley slope away to beyond sight. The piano could still be heard tinkling behind them. Parties emerging at the northern end found one of the tanks, which during the halt had driven through the barrage, cruising down the valley from the north, shooting with its six-pounder into the mouths of dugouts and shelters behind the wood. The Germans who were penned there in great numbers were largely left for the support battalions to force out and collect. The left of the 5th together with part of the 4th (1st Bde.) crossed the gully and went straight up the very steep slope there without opposition; but

⁸⁴ Measured in a straight line; the actual trench was longer. Of this, 200 yards had been seized by Garratt's party. As Germans still threw bombs from the huts Capt. Aarons, who came up, left some of his N.C.O's among the young British troops, and eventually had the huts burnt out with phosphorus bombs. McCarthy was awarded the Victoria Cross. In the 13th Bn., which also swung up its left flank this day, Lt. E. A. Hall (Ryde, N.S.W.) was mortally wounded.

the right companies, after clearing some of the enemy from behind the wood,⁸⁵ found that a machine-gun away to the right on the reverse slope of the knoll at the Roman road was sweeping the valley, making the crossing most perilous. The men accordingly were worked across, one or two at a time into the shelter of dugouts and old trenches on the eastern slope. When enough had gathered, they began to climb, but another machine-gun opened from the old French earthworks near the top, hitting several and again stopping the advance.



Two or three old communication trenches, however, led up the hill, and creeping through these the troops destroyed the machine-gun with a rifle-grenade, and then swarmed to the top and into the small Plateau Wood North. The old French emergency line lay just beyond the eastern end of the two Plateau copses, but any attempt to reach it was met with fire—described by two eyewitnesses as “terrific”—from trenches just beyond the southern wood, 150 yards north of the Roman road.

Meanwhile the 6th Battalion, crossing near the Roman road, lost many officers and men through these machine-guns, especially one which, from the top of the slope, swept the 300 yards of open flat at its foot. Sergt. Woodnorth⁸⁶ and a lance-corporal almost reached the strong-point at Plateau Wood South, but were killed, as was the Regimental Sergeant-Major, T. W. Gaston,⁸⁷ far ahead of the line. A tank coming from the southern end of St. Martin's Wood climbed the slope but

⁸⁵ Sgt. Clarke and one man of Lt. Volum's company took 60 prisoners, including a battalion commander, from dugouts there.

⁸⁶ Sgt. W. N. Woodnorth (No. 569; 6th Bn.). Blacksmith; of Fitzroy, Vic., and Auckland, N.Z., 1890. Killed in action, 23 Aug. 1918.

⁸⁷ Lt. T. W. Gaston, M.S.M., 6th Bn. Foreman boot machine operator; of Clifton Hill, Vic.; b. N. Fitzroy, Vic., 18 Apr. 1883. Killed in action, 23 Aug. 1918. (He did not know of his promotion to lieutenant.)



35. THE BIG GUN IN ARCY WOOD

Showing part of the ground over which McDermid's company attacked on 23rd August, 1918. The spur opposite is the one up which he moved after the halt. Chaignes lay behind it. (The photograph was taken eight months later, when the trees were bare. On August 23rd they were in full leaf.)

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E5128.

To face p. 744



36. PRISONERS COMING UP THE VALLEY NORTH OF BRAY
ON 22ND AUGUST, 1918

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E2951.



37. THE SCENE OF LIEUT. MCCARTHY'S EXPLOIT

The photograph was taken on 26th December, 1918 from almost the same point of view as the sketch on p. 742.

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo No E4023.

To face p. 745.

capsized in a trench at the top. Part of the 6th got across the gully to the hospital huts, but Capt. Johnston⁸⁸ of the right company and all his officers were hit and many troops were held up on the Knoll.

The sound of firing and the sight of some of the 5th driven back north of the road brought up Lieut. Joynt of the support battalion (8th), whose platoon was lying in Rainecourt gully, south of the road. He with his batman (Pte. Newman)⁸⁹ found some of the 6th in a sunken road on the Knoll hesitating to cross. Joynt urged them out and they went,⁹⁰ but as they did not appear on the next crest, "We'll have to go on," he said to Newman, "and ginger them up again." He then caught sight of them near the top of the opposite slope, held up by the intense fire from Plateau Wood South to which additional Germans were creeping along the main road. At this stage a brother officer of the 8th, Lieut. McGinn, came along Herleville gully with fifteen of his platoon. The German machine-gun above the flat was still firing. The rattle



of a Lewis gun joined in and then both guns stopped and a shout went up, "We've got him." McGinn's Lewis gunner had shot the German machine-gunner. Joynt decided to seize the wood, and with McGinn's party went safely northwards across the road capturing on the way a German aid-post⁹¹ and 50 prisoners. To secure covering fire for his attack Joynt searched back for the left of the 6th, and asked Lieut. Darby⁹² to occupy the sunken road on the Knoll and open fire on Plateau Wood "like blazes." Darby leapt at the scheme. Joynt and McGinn gave themselves fifteen minutes to get into position. They

⁸⁸ Capt. J. D. Johnston, M.C., 6th Bn. School teacher; of Caulfield, Vic.; b. Whitehaven, Eng., 31 Mar. 1887.

⁸⁹ Pte. T. Newman (No. 5181; 8th Bn.). Blacksmith's striker; of Melbourne; b. Barking, Eng., 1897.

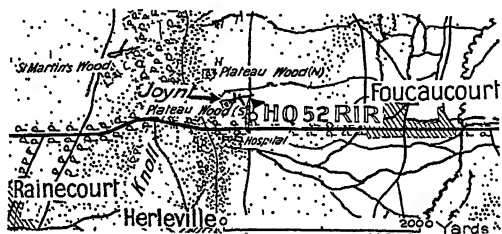
⁹⁰ They were under a new officer who was uncertain how to make the passage. A fine sergeant was urging, "We must do it sometime—better do it now." Joynt advised the officer to go "anyhow—by rushes of 25 yards!" which he did.

⁹¹ The two doctors there said they would stay and look after the Australian wounded and their own, and did so.

⁹² Maj. H. F. Darby, 6th Bn. Accountant; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Launceston, Tas., 28 Mar. 1894.

worked through a trench across the plateau passing abandoned machine-guns, dead Germans, and dugouts full of enemy who would not fight. Joynt, leading, was trying to extract some of these when he heard a rustle farther along the trench and there were 20 Germans coming with rifles held across their chests. His revolver at once covered the leading man, who dropped his rifle and held up his hands. The others followed suit. Two Victorians escorted them to the gully.

Joynt had lined out his men along the trench facing the wood. But fifty yards lay between and, despite the advice of a red-headed Digger who urged, "Let's rush the bloody thing," Joynt knew that a machine-gun there would sweep the ground. He had to restrain the men while he cast about for a better approach. He soon found a trench leading straight to the wood and to the machine-gun.



They crept up it, a very brave Digger in the lead, when a cry went up, "They're running." The Germans had broken. The party rushed after them, and in a dugout twenty yards inside the wood captured a dozen. Ten yards from it lay Sergt. Woodnorth's body. Joynt went across to Capt. Permezel⁹³ at the northern wood and the line was established east of both woods.⁹⁴

The German side of this fighting is fully described in the history of the 52nd R.I.R. which (as will be explained later) held a narrow front astride the Roman road. Its 2nd Machine-gun Company—six heavy guns under Res.-Lt. König—was posted on the eastern side of the valley opposite St. Martin's Wood as reserve of the 213th Bde.; two guns of the 3rd Company were on their southern flank. Two of König's guns had been with the divisional trench-mortar company at Plateau Wood South (the German "Brigadewald"); but when the attack began he stationed them all on the edge of the valley. It was these, together with a machine-gun and some engineers (213th Pion. Coy—also brigade reserve) on the Knoll at the Roman

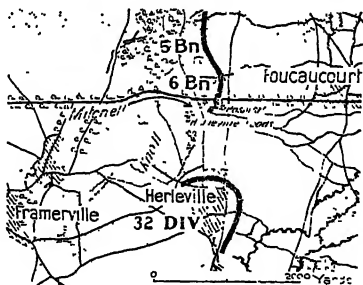
⁹³ Capt. E. G. de T. Permezel, M.C., 5th Bn. Insurance clerk; of E. Malvern, Vic.; b. Caulfield, Vic., 7 May 1894.

⁹⁴ Joynt then returned to his company to find that its leader, Lt. C. M. Findlay (Ballarat, Vic.), had been killed and he himself was in command. Soon afterwards he was ordered by Col. Mitchell to reinforce the very position that he had captured. He was awarded the Victoria Cross.

road ("Hermannsberg"), that first stopped the Australians crossing the valley; the headquarters and aid-post of the I/52nd in the valley were captured.⁹⁵ Lt. Mathesius, adjutant of the II/52nd, who had managed to get back to the regiment's headquarters in the sunken road behind Plateau Wood South was then sent up to König, taking batmen and all men available. König was troubled by the attack of the 6th Bn. through the hospital camp along the southern edge of the Roman road, behind his left flank. An officer sent by him with two machine-guns to Plateau Wood South was badly wounded, and one gun carrier killed. König brought in the gun, and about 6 o'clock, hearing that Australians had got into the wood, he rushed thither and himself shot the one or two who reached it.

About 7.25 (he says) the Australians crossed the valley south of him. Being outflanked there he placed Mathesius' party—now 70 strong through the arrival of some machine-gun crews of the 3rd Company—in a sap facing south while his own machine-gunners fell back on another sap leading from his wood towards the northern wood. Three attacks from the northern wood were, he says, beaten back with great loss, but at 7.30 a thrust, apparently by Joynt's party and also south of the Roman road, drove him fifty yards back upon Mathesius.

The right of the 6th at the hospital had left behind it some of the Herleville woods, separate copses, containing numbers of Germans; and others were in the long, deep communication trenches leading to the plateau west of Foucaucourt. During the morning parties of Germans actually worked down some of these trenches into the gully north of Herleville. On the left of the 32nd Division, a staff officer, Maj. Wyld,⁹⁶ who went to Herleville to find why no news arrived from there, ascertained that a gap existed between the 32nd and the Australians⁹⁷—the left company of the Highlanders was north of it with the 6th Australian Battalion. Wyld formed what men



⁹⁵ One of its medical officers, Unterarzt Tannenberg, was slightly wounded during his day-long effort for the wounded of both sides.

⁹⁶ Maj. J. W. G. Wyld, D.S.O., M.C.; Oxford and Bucks. L. I. G.S.O. 2, 35th Div., 1918; G.S.O. 2, 32nd Div. 1918-19; Bde.-Maj. N. Russian Relief Force, 1919; b. 6 Jan. 1896.

⁹⁷ The commander of the 97th Bde. expressed himself as very pleased with the swiftness and accuracy of the information also sent him by the forward observers of the 2nd Aust. Divl. Artillery which was supporting him, but it was not obtained without loss. Lieut. T. K. Rowan (Merredin, W.A.) of the 4th Aust. F.A. Bde., went up to ascertain where the front lay but was never again seen alive.

he could find into a flank facing northwards, and both the British and Australian brigadiers ordered support troops to be used in clearing the German nests from this gap. Already, however, at 8 o'clock Col. Mitchell (8th Bn.), having a general instruction to help the 6th, had gone to this gully. A fierce fire fight was raging; he could see no sign of the contending troops, but could judge the position of his own side by the sound of Lewis guns. Germans were clearly in Herleville woods between and behind them. By gradual fighting the reinforcements cleared these woods, and after noon mainly by Lewis gun fire cleared the communication trenches,⁹⁸ and worked up them into line with the 6th in the hospital and the British farther south. They were then on their objective, but the fire on the plateau at the Roman road was so intense that no ground could be stolen there by "exploitation."⁹⁹

In the 1st Brigade's sector also the edge of the plateau had to be seized at this stage, but only as far north as the entrance of Chuignes gully. While the 4th Battalion waited along the western slope it had been fired on by Germans lining the opposite heights, who could see through the dust of the protective barrage. When the advance recommenced the support companies "leap-frogged" over the front companies, but the right, under Capt. Macalpine, was stopped by the enemy's fire.¹⁰⁰ On the left, however, Capt. Newth's¹ company ran across the flat to the shelter of the opposite slope, and going straight up the steep hill entered the old trenches on the crest. Macalpine's company was still held up, but L.-Corpl. King² of Newth's flank platoon crawled out and found a strong German post in trenches half way down the slope busily firing at Macalpine's company. He shot the two machine-gunners, and rushed the position, capturing twenty men.

⁹⁸ 6th Bn. H.Q. also sniped with marked effect from the Knoll.

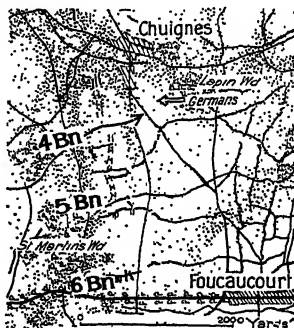
⁹⁹ König says the Australians at one time passed the alignment of the sunken road behind him. A few Germans remained behind the Australian lines till evening, one party firing with a trench-mortar on to the Knoll. About 4 p.m. three Highlanders, returning from the Australian flank, captured 50 Germans in Herleville Wood. In St. Martin's Wood a hidden sniper fired all day on distant men crossing the tramline; when men were near him he lay quiet.

¹⁰⁰ Lt. C. H. Guan (Dulwich Hill, N.S.W.) was killed.

¹ Capt. F. W. Newth, M.C., 4th Bn. Stock and station agent; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. Sydenham, N.S.W., 23 May 1890.

² Cpl. R. C. King, D.C.M. (No. 7496; 4th Bn.). Engine-driver; of North Shore, Geelong, Vic.; b. Camberwell, Vic., 16 Jan. 1888.

Macalpine's company now crossed the valley. Germans above them, already outflanked by Newth's company, gave way. On the crest a party still resisted, but Newth called up a tank from the valley. It made a *détour* to the left and seized this post also.³ Other Germans in a communication trench were overcome and the 4th passed over the crest into a small gully beyond. Just then, hearing a chatter of machine-guns in the sky, the men looked up. Two British aeroplanes were there, firing white flares, a warning of counter-attack. From the edge of Lapin Wood, 500 yards ahead, came a company of Germans. Newth's Lewis gunners fired at them, and both sides raced ahead to reach the Chuignes-Foucaucourt road, beyond the small gully. The 4th reached it first, the Germans dropping into some trenches 100 yards away where they were captured by a patrol.⁴



Next to the 4th, McDermid's company of the 3rd attacked the heights south of the opening of Chuignes valley. But, apparently through the error of one battery, the barrage continued to burst there. McDermid accordingly held his men for the moment in the valley. Germans on old camp ledges high on the bluff known as "Gibraltar," overlooking Chuignes valley from the north, were firing on the flats; but two tank commanders swung their machines broadside to the fire, and McDermid, with maps spread behind this shelter, arranged with them and with two artillery observing officers⁵ a plan for taking the spur when the guns lifted.⁶ At 6.30, when the whole

³ Sgt. J. Taylor (Petersham, N.S.W.) and the left platoon went with it.

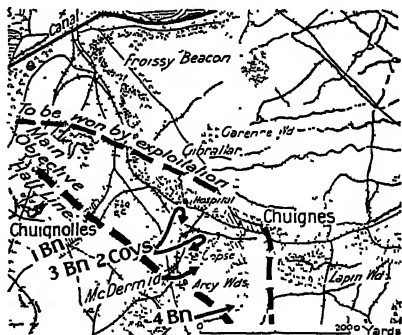
⁴ Under Lt. T. J. Perkins. It captured 25 Germans and 2 machine-guns. In the valley were some German artillery officers and a battery, its guns still hot.

⁵ Possibly Lts. L. C. McCarthy (Mosman, N.S.W.) 53rd Bty. and J. T. V. Smith (Lower Mitcham, S.A.) 113th Bty. Lt. C. B. Thorne, whose section of the 55th Bty. pushed up at 6.23 to near Proyart, accompanied the 4th Bn.

⁶ During this halt the intelligence officer Lt. C. O. Clark, came up and said that in one of the woods in the valley beside them (known as Arcy Woods) was a huge gun. It was found by several parties—Lt.-Cpls. J. T. Conmee (Sydney) and J. N. Doughty (Tumbarumba, N.S.W.), and independently by some of Lt. Mitchell's platoon, 1st Bn. The gun, which was of 14-inch calibre, had been blown up, the barrel lying in front of its immense mounting. It was the largest that fired on Amiens and had been shooting since early in June. The

barrage ended, the tanks and the company went on, covered by Vickers machine-guns which shot over their heads at the Germans on Gibraltar. In spite of heavy German fire the spur south of Chuignes valley was climbed. From a copse upon it invisible machine-guns opened but a tank cruised round the wood shooting; Germans bolted from the trees to Chuignes and up Gibraltar heights. The company crept into the copse and finished the work. and by 7.10 the spur was captured.

But this was also the time, after the barrage ended, when under another barrage⁷ the exploitation to Gibraltar should have been in progress. Two additional companies of the 3rd which were to seize this foothold had come up and—in effect—they extended northwards the front of McDermid's attack. After deploying on the flat by the railway they tried to advance but were met by a hurricane of fire including that of an anti-tank field-gun using grape-shot. Two field-guns near Garenne Wood pounded the right. Except by one approach Gibraltar was too steep for the tanks and that approach was covered by the anti-tank gun. Lieut. Jackson's⁸ company tried to move past McDermid's



flank into Chuignes, but Jackson was hit and the fire was so intense that McDermid withdrew all except a few small posts from the spur he had captured. Capt. Cormack,⁹ directing his company towards the hospital huts at the foot of Gibraltar slope, was killed at the railway; and the advance stopped. At

first barrel had been replaced and the new one was ready by Aug. 7. After firing 35 shells it was destroyed by the Germans on the morning of the 8th. Both Doughty and Conmee entered these woods while Germans were still there, and were fired on by members of a battalion staff, whom they captured. The gun is shown in *Vol. XII, Plate 531*, but the statement there that its position was previously unknown is an error.

⁷ McDermid knew nothing of the order for this barrage.

⁸ Lt. E. H. Jackson, D.C.M.; 3rd Bn. Station overseer; of Hillston and St. Mary's, N.S.W.; b. Bondi, N.S.W., 23 Aug. 1885.

⁹ Capt. A. G. Cormack, 3rd Bn. Builder; of Ryde, N.S.W.; b. Caithness, Wick, Scotland, 4 Aug. 1879. Killed in action, 23 Aug. 1918.

McDermid's request Gibraltar and Garenne Wood were there-upon shelled (apparently by the 16th Brigade, R.H.A.) and Cormack's company, now under Lieut. Sturt,¹⁰ managed to withdraw and reorganise in Arcy Wood. The 4th Battalion sent a patrol under Lieut. Perkins¹¹ into Chuignes and found it empty.¹²

In front of the 1st Battalion Froissy valley was largely occupied by huts and store depots and at its northern end the railway expanded into many tracks. The western slope and the flat were under intense fire from the heights at short range and, as the barrage on the left had ended early, the enemy had time to watch and fire on later movements. In addition, as Steen's company emerged from Chuignolles Wood, Germans behind its left hurriedly set up two machine-guns near the eastern exit from Chuignolles. Two youngsters of Withy's company, which had pushed out posts north of the village, shot down the first gunners,¹³ but the centre company had to lie low on reaching a sunken road overlooking the bottom of the valley. Farther south, part of the right which had nearly reached the hospital was withdrawn and the front line was eventually adjusted by Col. Stacy with its right flank on Arcy Wood.

North of Chuignolles Lieut. Kelleway¹⁴ of Withy's company, being troubled, as his platoon dug in, by fire from a copse (Little Wood) on his left, went with a tank and seized it.¹⁵ But from Long Wood, 200 yards ahead, and Luc Wood, on the slope to the Somme, vicious fire still came. Accordingly Maj. Street¹⁶ of the reserve company, on reaching Capt. Withy decided to carry out the exploitation phase by first seizing Long Wood on the southern slope, and thence attacking the

¹⁰ Capt. C. L. Sturt, M.C.; 3rd Bn. Farmer; of Cootamundra, N.S.W.; b. Bulli, 5 Feb. 1893.

¹¹ Lt. T. J. Perkins, M.C.; 4th Bn. Bank clerk; of Launceston, Tas.; b. Evandale, Tas., 5 Nov. 1894.

¹² As he could get no touch with McDermid, two platoons of Isaacs' company were brought up to guard this flank.

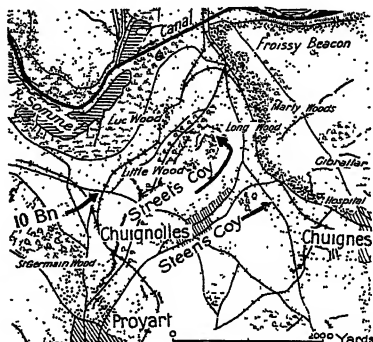
¹³ Pte. G. E. Semmler (Barmedman, N.S.W.), firing at 200 yards from the shoulder, hit one with his first shot.

¹⁴ Capt. C. Kelleway, 1st Bn. Accountant; of Glebe Point, N.S.W.; b. Lismore, N.S.W., 25 Apr. 1886. A cricketer of the Australian XI.

¹⁵ The platoon caught a German sentry just arousing the garrison in a dugout, and captured 50 men and 6 trench-mortars.

¹⁶ Afterwards Minister for Defence; killed in air crash, 13 Aug. 1940.

Germans in Luc Wood from their rear. A tank commander was asked to help and drove across the open round the edges of Long Wood. At 7.30 two platoons under Lieuts. Blake and Crowhurst¹⁷ cleverly attacked the wood from the rear, though under heavy fire from a copse farther north,¹⁸ and drove the Germans westwards into the Australian line.



About that time there arrived at Lieut.-Col. Stacy's headquarters that vigorous spirit, Wilder-Neligan, whose battalion, the 10th, was to protect the left for the coming attack on Froissy Beacon. Learning that the 1st Battalion's northern post was being harassed by fire from Luc Wood he arranged to clear the flank then and there, and ordered Maj. McCann, who had two companies ready on that flank, to do so. McCann's first patrols were stopped by sharp fire but, together with a platoon of the 59th and with two from Street's company¹⁹ coming from the south, McCann's companies had by 8.30 worked through the wood,²⁰ established posts around it, and sent out patrols. Here, after the barrage and a special smoke screen laid upon the valley and heights²¹ had ceased, movement had been most difficult since several field-guns and many machine-guns on Froissy heights and in Marly Woods burst into action when anything stirred. But the field artillery was now moving up—a most inspiring sight—to Proyart valley. "O" Battery, R.H.A., entrusted with helping the 1st Battalion in exploitation, actually thrust forward to the open hill north-west of Chuignolles. Unfor-

¹⁷ Lt. D. A. Crowhurst, 1st Bn. Bank clerk; of Sydney; b. Rockley, N.S.W., 29 July 1894.

¹⁸ They had advanced in artillery formation to the south-eastern corner of the wood. There strong fire was brought on them, so they deployed at once and attacked. Lt. J. P. Kelly with a patrol passed north of the wood about the same time.

¹⁹ Under Lts. G. Bitmead (Hurstville, N.S.W.) and H. L. L. O'Neill (Newcastle, N.S.W.).

²⁰ 15 prisoners and 4 machine-guns were taken.

²¹ By the 3rd Div.'s artillery north of the river.

tunately communication was slow—for a time a mounted orderly was the only means. But at 8.30 the 298th R.F.A. Brigade, driving up, established touch with Neligan and heavily shelled the heights. An observer of the 49th Battery, Lieut. W. F. Osmund,²² also noticed the trouble and directed the fire of the 49th, 50th and 113th Batteries on to the crest. The German fire greatly diminished. The 10th Battalion sent four platoons, covered by Lewis and Vickers machine-guns, farther down the spur north of Chuignolles and also cleared the Somme flats, capturing three more machine-guns.²³

Practically all the main objective had thus been taken and also, on the northern flank, all the objective to be reached by immediate exploitation. In the centre exploitation had failed to reach the line set; but that the Germans had suffered a stunning blow their own records make clear.

The attack south of the Somme, which fell upon three divisions—21st, 107th, and 185th—had practically wiped away their main line garrison, except at the extreme north and south where portions had not yet been attacked. The assault was expected—Byng's offensive on Aug. 21 had warned the Second German Army, which had forthwith ordered the XI Corps to garrison the H.W.L. II, on the plateau behind Froissy valley, with reserve troops—the resting battalions of the 21st Divn. and the three regiments of the 243rd Divn.

The front line facing the 1st Aust. Bde. had been held by two regiments (87th and 80th) of the 21st Divn. These had come in on Aug. 17²⁴, and were told that the opposing front was held by tired troops. "Great strong figures with dash and enterprise," says the historian of the 87th I.R. with reference to the peaceful penetration that immediately began, "these Australians do not give the impression of a worn out division." The regiments of the 21st Divn. held their line in depth, one battalion in the outposts west of the valley, the support battalion in the valley and on Froissy heights. Heavy losses through trench-mortar bombardment on the night of the 22nd caused the commander of the 87th to withdraw his outposts 100 yards. The 1st Aust. Bn.'s attack immediately afterwards overwhelmed all these except in the sector of the northernmost company; the posts of the support battalion "stared, strained, into the mist." Two companies stationed to keep contact on the north and a company of engineers (5/21st) were rushed up, and it was against these troops and forward battalion H.Q. that the 1st and 10th Aust. Bns. and tanks fought during the exploitation stage. The

²² Maj. W. F. Osmund, M.C. Farmer; of King Island, Tas.; b. Salisbury, Eng., 28 Apr. 1893. (The 49th Bty. fired this day 2700 rounds from five guns.)

²³ Lt. E. L. Angove (Tea Tree Gully, S.A.) was killed at McCann's headquarters. Two of the *liaison* officers sent by the 10th to flanking units—Lts. F. Sharpe (Renmark, S.A.) and H. H. Coombe (Port Wakefield, S.A.)—also were killed this day.

²⁴ Relieving the 108th Div., then holding its front with troops of the 243rd.

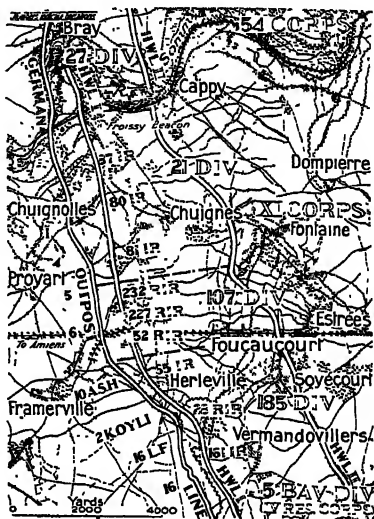
German posts cheered their 3rd Bty., 27th F.A.R., as its guns hit tank after tank. But the commander of the front battalion barely escaped as the Australian parties closed from both sides on his headquarters among the engineer dumps.

Farther south the front battalion of the 80th I.R. was equally overwhelmed. But its commander and staff reached Gibraltar height, above Chuignes, where the support battalion lay; and it was these troops that drove back the 3rd Aust. Bn. when it attempted to reach those heights. The German guns there shot well, and Chuignes was evacuated in order to let them shell it.

South of Chuignes valley the 2nd Aust. Bde. was faced by the 81st I.R. (21st Divn.) and, on a narrow front, by the much tried 107th Divn. with its two remaining regiments, 232nd R.I.R. at St. Martin's Wood, and 52nd R.I.R. (with which the 227th had been combined) astride the Roman road. Each regiment had two battalions in the line; and behind each of them two companies of the 122nd I.R. (243rd Divn.) lay in the woods. Early in the morning the outposts of the 52nd had seen men moving; and a few minutes before the attack the 232nd heard the tanks. Each regiment called down artillery fire.

For the 232nd the day was "the most fateful of the whole campaign." Nearly the whole regiment and the companies of the 122nd behind it were cut off and captured in the woods or valleys.²⁵ The 52nd suffered almost as severely. How Lts. König and Mathesius formed a rallying point on the plateau in front of the sunken Chuignes-Herleville road, in which the regiment's H.Q. at first lay,²⁶ has already been described. About 1 o'clock this group counter-attacked towards the hospital. König claims that it forced its opponents back a little, held on until 9 p.m., and then withdrew unnoticed.

Farther south the 32nd Divn. was faced by the 185th of the IV Res. Corps. It was the two northern regiments (65th I.R. and 28th R.I.R.) of this division that counter-attacked at Herleville.²⁷ The 65th I.R. lost 17 officers and 368 of other ranks. The trench taken by McCarthy was farther south in the sector of the 161st I.R.



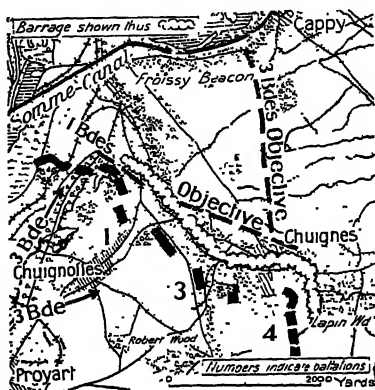
²⁵ The 232nd R.I.R. lost all three battalion staffs, all medical officers, all company commanders, and 600 men. It had previously lost 300 in the Lihons-Proyart fighting.

²⁶ With that of the 232nd it soon retired to Foucaucourt.

²⁷ The history of the 28th R.I.R. says: "The fight was too bitter for taking prisoners."

The 1st Brigade's exploitation took much longer than expected. The 3rd Brigade's attack was to have begun in mid-morning; at 7 a.m. Brig.-Genl. Bennett ordered his battalions to keep touch with those ahead and to pass through when these gained the exploitation objective. Wilder-Neligan of the 10th passed through before then but, as the other battalions had clearly not had the opportunity, Bennett at 10 o'clock decided to attack at a fixed hour under a creeping barrage. The line reached by the 1st and 3rd Battalions had by then been ascertained and the two supporting artillery brigades²⁸ would start their barrage on a line running generally along the valley. General Glasgow ordered that the outposts of the 1st Brigade on that front must advance as soon as it fell and reach the line already set for their exploitation; by then the 3rd Brigade should be arriving to pass through. The 1st Brigade warned the 1st and 3rd Battalions to be ready to start at 1 o'clock or as soon after as they saw the barrage, which "should be easily recognised."

This message, received at battalion headquarters just before 1 o'clock, had not reached all the posts when at 2 the barrage came down. Capt. Withy of the 1st, north of Chuignolles, had received the order and raced with Lieut. Scales's²⁹ platoon down the hill to catch up the barrage. His messenger had been unable to find Lieut. Kelleway's post, but Withy caught sight of Kelleway standing his men to arms and ran to him with the news, and Kelleway's platoon too raced down the spur. Far along the valley to the right the two "exploitation" companies of the 3rd were waiting for this movement—Lieut. Sturt had sent an officer northwards to wave his hand



Thick lines show front at 2 p.m.

²⁸ The 5th R.H.A. and 298th R.F.A. The 16th Bde. R.H.A. and 13th and 14th A.F.A. helped on the southern flank

²⁹ Lt. F. H. Scales, 1st Bn. Clerk; of Epping, N.S.W.; b. Bromley, Eng., 9 May 1884.

if he saw troops advancing. Near Chuignolles Wood the officer waved, and Sturt's company crossed the valley under heavy fire and began to climb while the right company of the 3rd made for Chuignes. As the left reached the hospital huts³⁰ and the dead ground under the steep hill the Germans above them began to break, and when after zig-zagging up the height the Australians reached the top, the enemy was 300 yards away, making for trenches behind Garenne Wood. Farther north parts of the right battalion of the 3rd Brigade, the 12th, with some of the 1st among them, crossed the flat and, passing through Marly Woods on the steep slope, reached the sunken road at the crest where they captured 40 Germans, 2 field-guns and an anti-tank gun; but the barrage advancing 100 yards every three minutes, had been too fast for the troops in such a fight, and when they tried to leave the woods and cross the plateau they were met by intense fire from Garenne Wood, which drove them back to the lip of the crest. Here Maj. Foster,³¹ of the centre company of the 12th, reorganised the line and tried again to advance. In this attempt he, Lieut. Kelly³² of the 1st (a leader in many enterprises that day), and many others were killed, and, for a time, the assault was checked. North of this, where as yet the 3rd Brigade had not appeared, Lieut. Scales of the 1st³³ pushed northwards along the steep slope. Germans with two machine-guns and the field-gun that had hit so many tanks held them up till numbers of the 12th were seen coming. The Germans then made for their dugout where 22 were captured. Scales went on along the slope to Froissy Beacon itself, meeting only a few Germans waiting to surrender. A quarter of an hour later the left of the 3rd Brigade appeared below and climbed the slope.

That brigade had experienced a most difficult approach. At 2.30 a.m. it had come up to the valley north of Proyard, near St. Germain Woods, in readiness. There the German barrage

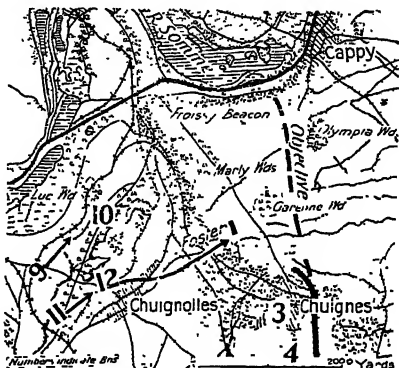
³⁰ On the slope 500 yards west of Chuignes. Chuignolles Wood was just east of Chuignolles. For a photograph of this valley see *Plate 530, Vol. XII.*

³¹ Maj. J. A. Foster, 12th Bn. Pastoralist; of Merton Vale, Campbell Town, Tas.; b. Hobart, 22 May 1890. Killed in action, 23 Aug. 1918. (His father—Maj. H. Foster—was prominent in raising the Tasmanian part of the 26th Bn., and accompanied it to Gallipoli.)

³² Lt. J. P. Kelly, 1st Bn. Labourer; of Melbourne; b. Tallangatta, Vic., 1888. Killed in action, 23 Aug. 1918.

³³ With some of his own men and a few of the 3rd Bde.

brought down by the original attack burst about it exploding a dump and killing or wounding 50 of the 12th Battalion,³⁴ 30 of the 11th, and 70 of the 2nd (reserve of the 1st Brigade). The 12th, finding its waiting position enfiladed by the guns, shifted to St. Germain woods.³⁵ General Bennett's order for the attack at 2 o'clock was issued at 10.15. The left battalion (9th) moved forward at 12.30 and the right (12th) soon after in order to get close to the barrage when it fell. But after the 12th emerged from the railway cutting by which it had crossed Chuignolles ridge, its left companies, moving down through the wheatfield north of the village, came under intense direct fire of all arms from Froissy Heights. The men crept from the crop into the village where they waited for a while in cover. The right after crossing the valley behind the barrage was temporarily held up before Garenne Wood as already described. But Lieuts. Vaughan and Maj. Foster's successor, Lieut. Terry,³⁶ worked their companies around the south of this wood,³⁷ and Lieut. Gandy's, climbing up from Chuignolles, pushed round the north. The enemy withdrew along old communication trenches and the 12th reached its objective on the plateau.



The 9th Battalion, which was to advance along the Somme slope, through Luc Wood, to Froissy Beacon and the plateau beyond, met heavy bombardment in the woods, partly with gas shell. A spectator on the other side of the Somme, waiting

³⁴ C.Q.M. Sgt. A. H. White (Pingelly, W.A.) of the 12th was killed. The cooks of the battalions came right up to the troops there.

³⁵ While the troops were waiting many prisoners came racing through the barrage, and the 5th Bde., R.H.A., which with the 298th R.F.A. Bde. was to cover the attack galloped past to help the 1st Bn., some of its guns, when shelled, moving farther forward to a better position. Their teams and the infantry were also bombed from the air but without much effect.

³⁶ Lt. E. E. Terry, M.M.; 12th Bn. School teacher; of New Norfolk, Tas.; b. Plenty, Tas., 4 July 1895. Killed in action, 25 Aug. 1918.

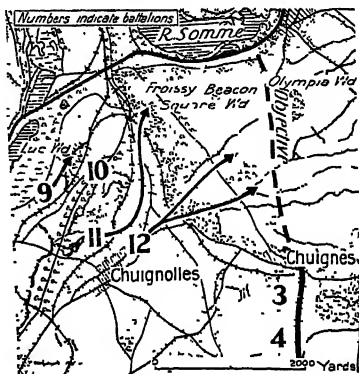
³⁷ Helped by the fire of the 3rd Bn. from the slope above Chuignolles.

for the appearance of these troops, describes the scene³⁸ (his account is here summarised)—

There was no mistaking the Australian barrage—a roll of drum fire and clouds of dust and smoke down the slope (east of Luc Wood).³⁹ Next a handful of men were seen filing across a space to some old British huts near the wood and searching them; after a long time men moving in sections past other huts lower on the slope. A string of Germans began to retire across Froissy plateau. Next came a few more running across it for a mile, with the barrage after them. Then in Luc Wood, where men had been first noted, came numbers

of others advancing fast in many little sections, well spaced out in line. They ran through those woods like water through grass and very soon afterwards were seen, first in the valley, where Germans had been before, next on the hill-top, next moving across the slope east of Froissy Beacon. Germans could be seen in a depression, with a quarry, at the eastern edge of Froissy plateau. When the foremost Austrafians were well past Garenne Wood and others reaching the Beacon, German artillery observers north of the Somme saw them and called down

a heavy barrage, screening that part of the plateau in dust. "Presently the dust half cleared and we saw the men there get at once from the trench in which they had subsided for the moment . . . and go quickly through that shell smoke in good formation and across the green towards where the front lines had gone. The German dropped his barrage again very quickly . . . but they were well ahead of most of the shelling by that time." The teams of a German battery could be seen in the gully ahead. About 5 o'clock they made their run for it, one gun after another, up the slope of that gully, on whose eastern side lay Olympia Wood, along the farther plateau to disappear behind the distant Château Orchard. A second battery followed and also got clear.



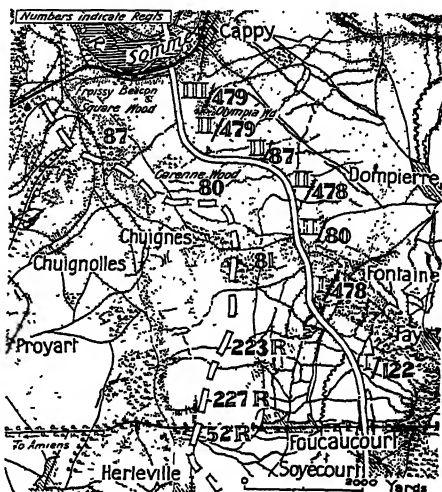
The 9th Battalion must have been nearly an hour late. Meanwhile the 11th (comprising only three weak companies) had followed the 12th, and after being caught, like it, by fire in the wheatfield had sent its two leading companies northwards up Froissy valley, in order to mop up after the 9th had passed. But the 9th had not arrived and these companies, under Capt. Tulloch (of Gallipoli fame) and Lieut.

³⁸ Photographs of this advance and the Australian barrage are in *Vol. XII, Plates 527-9*.

³⁹ This writer also noted later the heavy German shelling on Luc Wood.

Norrie, were fired on from copses, timber and coal stacks, and huts. The Western Australians worked, fighting, round these obstacles, the Germans bolting when outflanked and being chased around dumps and driven up the hill or along the Somme valley towards Cappy.⁴⁰ Completely beaten in

this valley the Germans made no stand at Froissy Beacon. There Tulloch found Lieut. Scales and his party waiting and, with a platoon of the 12th under Lieut. Dollery,⁴¹ moved out across the plateau north of Square Wood. As it approached the Germans east of the plateau the advance was made by section rushes, the officers giving the signal on their whistles.⁴² It ended on the objective near the gully by Olympia



Germans facing the attack at 2 p.m.

Wood. The Australians fired at the escaping gun-teams, but could not stop them. The 9th, which came up last, afterwards withdrew and formed posts behind the left flank, guarding the steep slope to the Somme.⁴³

The 2 o'clock attack was at first faced only by the remnant of the former front line troops and their immediate reserves. At Gibraltar and Garenne Wood the support battalion of the 80th, still intact, held the Australians back until outflanked farther north. Remnants of the front and support battalions of the 87th fought amid the dumps in the valley, and falling back, mostly towards Cappy, covered the withdrawal of a heavy battery there.

⁴⁰ Lt. Norrie and an N.C.O., firing through the window of a house into a crowd of Germans penned there, captured 37 and two machine-guns. Norrie's company numbered only 50. Elsewhere Cpl. E. Worthington (Geraldton, W.A.; killed in action, 18 Sep. 1918), creeping behind some timber stacks bombed and captured another party.

⁴¹ Lt.-Col. E. M. Dollery, M.C.; 12th Bn., and H.Q. 1st Aust. Corps, A.I.F., 1940. Electrical Engineer; of Hobart; b. Hobart, 21 Apr. 1897. (On his return to Australia he entered the Military College at Duntroon, graduating in Dec., 1921).

⁴² The 9th came up in artillery formation, only deploying near Square Wood.

⁴³ Tulloch's company of the 11th also came back into support.

But on crossing the crest the Australians were faced by the line of positions comprising H.W.L. II, already manned as indicated in the marginal sketch. At 9 a.m. the 1/479th I.R., near Cappy, ready to counter-attack, had been placed under the 21st Divn. The penetration of the 4th and 3rd Aust. Bns. and tanks south of Chuignes caused the report of a break-through towards Dompierre, and this battalion was hurried thither. But H.W.L. II was not yet being attacked. At 11 a.m. came the order that it was now to be held at the main line, any troops in front of it being regarded as garrison of the forward zone. It was not till 3.30 that the 3rd Aust. Bde. streaming across the plateau⁴⁴ drove the Germans from that part of the new main line. The 21st Divn. at once ordered Froissy plateau to be retaken, and the 479th I.R. was reinforced by the 148th I.R. (41st Divn.) for that purpose. As it was late, however, before that regiment came up it merely reinforced the existing line. The 247th R.I.R. (54th Res. Divn.), then 100 rifles strong, was also to come from north of the Somme. But before it could arrive it became involved in fighting on its own side of the river.

Farther south the tired 108th Divn. had been alarmed and brought up to man H.W.L. II where it was still the second line of resistance, astride the Roman road behind Foucaucourt. The 122nd Fusilier Regt. (243rd Divn.) now faced the 2nd Aust. Bde. west of that village. But the regiment had only the strength of a weak battalion.

The Australian Corps had by dusk won not only its main objective but, except for immaterial fractions, the ground intended to be gained by exploitation. Most of the German batteries lay beyond this line, at the head of Chuignes gully, and the troops' elation was somewhat damped by the severe shelling that followed.⁴⁵ Nevertheless a most powerful blow had been struck. Of 8,000 prisoners taken that day by fifteen divisions in the successful offensives of Fourth and Third Armies, the 1st Australian Division captured 2,000.⁴⁶ In Third Army the V Corps, thrusting south-east, reached the

**Haig's
change of
method**

⁴⁴ One German account says that they drove before them German "prisoners" who masked their fire. Actually they followed fleeing Germans.

⁴⁵ Probably the batteries were shooting away their supplies before retiring.

⁴⁶ By Aug. 26 the number was 61 officers and 2,535 others; in addition the 32nd Div. captured over 300. The loss of the 1st Aust. Div., Aug. 23-26, was 70 officers and 1,354 others, in addition to 9 and 320 gassed in the 2nd Bde. (mainly on Aug. 25). Details are as follows:

| 1st Brigade | | | 2nd Brigade | | | 3rd Brigade | | |
|-------------|------|------|-------------|------|------|-------------|------|------|
| | Off. | O.R. | | Off. | O.R. | | Off. | O.R. |
| 1st Bn. | 4 | 139 | 5th Bn. | 6 | 106 | 9th Bn. | 4 | 73 |
| 2nd Bn. | 3 | 89 | 6th Bn. | 7 | 127 | 10th Bn. | 6 | 22 |
| 3rd Bn. | 9 | 194 | 7th Bn. | 6 | 21 | 11th Bn. | 2 | 67 |
| 4th Bn. | 5 | 73 | 8th Bn. | 2 | 90 | 12th Bn. | 7 | 131 |
| L.T.M. Bty. | — | 5 | L.T.M. Bty. | — | 2 | L.T.M. Bty. | — | 1 |
| | 21 | 500 | | 21 | 346 | | 19 | 294 |

Divisional Units

| | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|---|----|--------|---|----|-----------|---|----|
| 1st Pr. Bn. | 3 | 63 | Engrs. | 2 | 19 | Arty. | 2 | 50 |
| 1st M.G. Bn. | 1 | 68 | Sigs. | 1 | 3 | Fld. Ams. | — | 11 |

The 32nd Div. lost on Aug. 23, 19 officers and 358 others.

edge of Irles and was reported to have entered Loupart Wood, little more than two miles from Bapaume.

At this juncture, and later, the tactics of the British Army were greatly influenced by a general order from Haig, who on August 22nd had decided that the great set pieces of the 8th and 21st must now be followed by a different method of attack. The Germans were becoming worn out and their plans disorganised, he said.

To turn the present situation to account the most resolute offensive is everywhere desirable. Risks which a month ago would have been criminal to incur ought now to be incurred as a duty. It is no longer necessary to advance in regular lines and step by step. On the contrary each division should be given a distant objective which must be reached independently of its neighbour, and even if one's flank is thereby exposed for the time being. Reinforcements must be directed to points where our troops are gaining ground not where they are checked. . . . The situation is most favourable. Let each one of us act energetically, and without hesitation push forward to our objective.

By August 23rd or 24th this order had reached down to battalions. In Third Army it was decided that the time was ripe for the attempt to break through to Bapaume, and two brigades of the New Zealand Division, which the V Corps had throughout reserved for that purpose, were ordered up on the night of the 23rd, to attack at 4.15 a.m. on the 24th. Farther south, Fourth Army, whose extreme left had advanced with Third Army on the 23rd from Albert towards Pozières, would attack at 1 a.m., the III Corps (47th, 12th, and 18th Divisions) intending to regain the ground captured and lost on the 22nd, and the 3rd Australian Division to seize Bray, if that village had not already been surrounded and captured by patrols at nightfall on the 23rd.

The 3rd Pioneer Battalion, holding the cliff looking down on Bray, had on the afternoon of the 23rd, after reconnais-

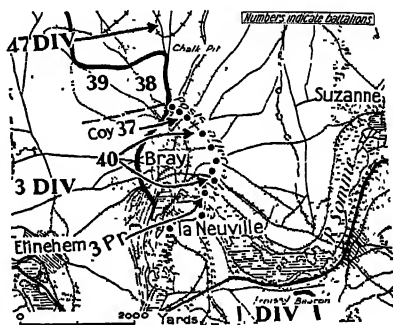
Bray sance by patrols, ferried two companies by means of two small boats to the peninsula there, across which Germans from south of the river had all day been fleeing.⁴⁷ These parties took la Neuville but the main bridge leading to Bray was unapproachable through machine-gun fire. Posts were established south of Bray, but as the place had not

⁴⁷ The peninsula is shown in *Vol. XII, Plate 524*. A liaison section under Sgt. A. A. Hudson (Newcastle and Baan Baa, N.S.W.) had worked with the 1st Divn. on the river and captured some prisoners and machine-guns.

been taken by nightfall the plan of attack stood. At midnight the posts were warned to withdraw as the village would be bombarded.

The attack on Bray was made by part of the 10th Brigade. During the night of the 24th this brigade relieved the 9th north-west and north of Bray, the 3rd Pioneers still holding the line south-west of it.⁴⁸ The 40th Battalion (Tas.) formed up behind the posts on the slope west of Bray and at 1 a.m., under a creeping barrage, its two forward companies, followed by a third to mop up and with one from the 37th moving on their left,⁴⁹ advanced down

the half-precipice towards the village, which, with its quaint church, lay in bright moonlight below. The 40th, which had marched seven and a half miles along a congested road, was only just in time.⁵⁰ Machine-guns opened from the trees at the north-west corner of Bray.⁵¹ The German barrage fell quickly, and as the



40th descended, closely hemmed between the two barrages, Maj. Giblin, economist, miner, farmer, statistician, and most trusted and experienced of company commanders, was wounded by a shell.⁵² His company went on north of the town and, though severely fired at from the hedges,⁵³ seized two machine-guns at the Cemetery, and, with the 37th, two others beyond it. The German bombardment was filling the valley with gas and the men had to put on their masks. It was found difficult to advance from the outskirts of Bray but a prompt message

⁴⁸ The line is shown in *Vol. XII, Plate 525*.

⁴⁹ This company of the 37th was in support.

⁵⁰ The company of the 37th was even later. It received the order in the support position only 20 minutes before the attack. Lt. E. J. Cox rushed off to reconnoitre. Before he returned Lt. L. J. Robertson had to run with the company down the gully. Against the flashes of the barrage to his right front he saw men and ran to them, guessing them to be the 40th—which they were.

⁵¹ One of these had fired just before zero hour. A scout had been sent to locate it and, when the barrage advanced, Lt. Cranswick's platoon surprised the post, capturing 3 machine-guns.

⁵² Cranswick took his place. Cranswick's platoon and another were then commanded by Sgt. V. H. Buchanan (Geelong, Vic.) who led magnificently in this action.

⁵³ One machine-gun on the main road did great damage.

caused the artillery barrage to be extended for fifteen minutes and a line of posts was duly placed east of the village. Lieut. Whitaker's company passing the southern outskirts had little trouble; Lieut. Lakin,⁵⁴ pushing north-east towards Cranswick's company, met Germans at a tree-lined bank, and after a short bomb fight captured 22 and 4 machine-guns. Lieut. Game⁵⁵ and his company, entering Bray at three points, quickly cleared it and then pushed eastwards. A machine-gun fired from the station but, on being bombarded with a Stokes mortar, the crew fled. In all, 186 Germans—mostly of the 202nd and 203rd R.I.R.'s (43rd Res. Divn.) but including some of the 25th and 27th Divisions—were captured.⁵⁶ The 37th and 40th had 74 casualties though only three were killed.

The answer to this attack was sharp shelling of the whole area, especially the village, largely with gas. North of the Australian position the III Corps had retaken the line reached by it on the 22nd. Its troops were in no condition to exploit the gain, and in this shelling some of them, north of the Chalk Pit, again fell back.⁵⁷

The history of the 117th I.R. (25th Divn.) says that the German line was to have been withdrawn at 4 a.m. to H.W.L. II (along the heights east of Bray) but the attack caught it before withdrawal. The regiment counter-attacked and drove back the British, but as H.W.L. II, farther north, was already lost, withdrawal to H.W.L. III (west of Billon Wood) was ordered in the afternoon.

The general line reached by III Corps was held, and orders were received that a further advance would be made at dawn on the 25th, the 58th Division taking the place of the 47th.

For, although the attempt of the New Zealanders that day to break through to Bapaume had been held up at the north-

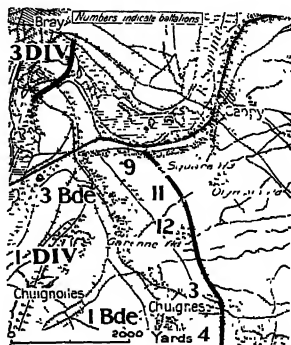
⁵⁴ Capt. N. E. Lakin, V.D.; 40th Bn. Clerk; of Launceston, Tas.; b. Launceston, 23 Aug. 1895.

⁵⁵ Lt. C. W. Game, M.C.; 40th Bn. School teacher; of Wynyard, Tas.; b. Wynyard, 21 July 1887.

⁵⁶ Many were uncertain of the position, and the 37th caused a number to approach it by imitating their calls. Bray railway yard was full of stores, partly loaded upon trains. The huge dumps were found by the engineers to have been mined, but were not blown up. The village was burning and was viciously shelled. Most troops, except runners and linesmen, kept clear of it.

⁵⁷ Capt. Dench of the 38th Bn. had relieved Brodziak here, and most gallantly went out twice and brought forward the British line. While organising it on the second occasion this fine leader was killed by a sniper, the same shot wounding Lt. E. M. Barker (Cottesloe, W.A.). Lt. F. J. Baxter (Miami and Leichardt, Vic.), who then took charge, was reinforced by a platoon under Lt. W. P. D. Murie (Albert Park, Vic.). Baxter that morning had rushed a German post 70 yards ahead of the Chalk Pit. An airman, mistaking one of the Australian posts for German, bombed it, killing 3 N.C.O's and 2 men, and wounding Lt. R. W. Gollan (Brunswick, Vic.). Till the British came up the northern flank was held, this day, by the 39th. It later relieved the 38th.

western edge of the town, there were signs that the Germans were in sore straits.⁵⁸ South of the Somme preparations were certainly being made to fall back to that river; the French captured prisoners who said their regiment was acting as a rearguard to cover a retreat to the Hindenburg Line, ten miles beyond the Somme. In consequence of these reports, on August 24th the posts of the 1st Division on Froissy plateau were ordered to advance and take the gully ahead and Olympia Wood beyond it. Lieut. Terry's company of the 12th bombed up one of the communication trenches leading eastwards but was stopped at 150 yards. Some of the officers in charge of the 9th, who were held to be lacking in vigour in grappling with the difficulties of the left flank, where the 3rd Division was at that moment nearly a mile behind the 1st, were replaced; but the attempt to advance there was stopped until the 3rd Division should come up.



**1st Division
August 24**

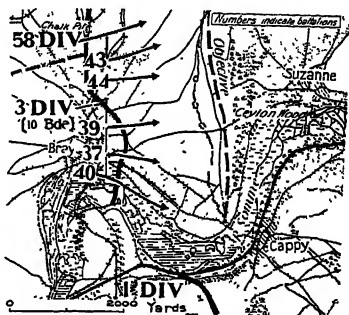
to advance there was stopped until the 3rd Division should come up.

German records show that the 479th I.R., now reinforced by most of the 148th I.R. and III/18th (both from 41st Divn.) had been ordered to advance the forward zone here to Froissy Valley, but the regiments were greatly mixed and it was not attempted. The 12th Bn.'s thrust pierced the line of the 80th I.R. which then withdrew slightly across the Cappy-Chuignes road.

The British advance north of the river in the small hours of August 25th was expected to be easy; on the previous morning the troops who captured Bray had seen many Germans withdrawing over the next spur, towards Suzanne. As this spur extended along a peninsula two-thirds of a mile southwards, a second brigade, the 11th, was put in to attack on the northern half of the 3rd Division's front. It used the 44th and 43rd Battalions, followed by the 42nd, which would exploit any success. The 10th Brigade (whose outposts withdrew in

⁵⁸ Prisoners of the 25th Div. said its loss was too heavy to allow counter-attack.

order to allow the barrage to fall close beyond Bray) attacked with the 40th, 37th, and 39th. The barrage crept slowly for a mile up the open ridge,⁵⁹ enabling the troops to suppress the few German posts there. No enemy flares answered the attack; "we walked slowly most of the time," reported Capt. Lewis⁶⁰ of the 44th. A few machine-gunners fought most bravely, especially on the 10th Brigade's front. Presently a fog gathered, and when the old trench-line on the crest was reached no one could see for 100 yards. The 40th Battalion pushed down the end of the peninsula to Cappy bridge, seizing 29 prisoners and 8 machine-guns. In the northern sector two companies of the 42nd passed through the 44th and 43rd and through Ceylon Wood, which covered the steep down-slope to the outskirts of Suzanne, and after searching the wood returned.⁶¹ The prisoners said they had been left behind to see if the British attacked, in which case they were to fall back on a main line of resistance at Suzanne.



Impressed by the enemy's disorganisation, III Corps decided to press on and seize Maricourt, which commanded the plateau, a mile wide, north of the Somme slopes. Meanwhile General Gellibrand had gone forward and arranged with his brigadiers, Generals Cannan and McNicoll, for an advance at 1 p.m. in four stages to the head of the next bend of the Somme at Fargny mill, two and a half miles away. A squadron of the 13th Light Horse was sent to help the brigades.

At this stage General Monash telephoned a direction, presumably laid down by Rawlinson, that the left—that is III Corps—must lead. The valley to Suzanne, therefore, should not be crossed until the 58th Division had Maricourt. But the

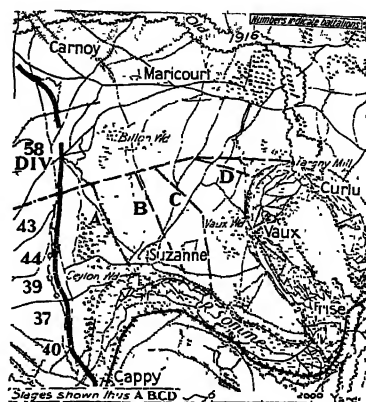
⁵⁹ Advancing at first 100 yards every four minutes, later 100 yards in six minutes. Parts of this barrage were rather ragged.

⁶⁰ Capt. M. Lewis, M.C.; 44th Bn. Tailor; of North Perth W.A.; b. Blaenavon, Wales, 21 Dec. 1892.

⁶¹ The line was very thin and a party of 37 Germans was missed. Capt. Longmore in his history of the 44th says that Capt. Lewis, Lt. R. B. O'Carroll and Sgt. F. Gillett (Osborne Park, W.A.) of the 44th were held up by these when exploring the wood, but bluffed them into surrender.

advance had already begun. headway; the mist had cleared at 10 a.m., and when the 44th and 43rd passed over the crest overlooking Ceylon Wood they were met by the fire not only of machine-guns but of field-guns shooting direct from many of the thirty small copses with which the moorland of the old battleground for miles beyond was punctuated, and also from Maricourt. All that day, though the higher commanders received constant reports that the 58th Division had passed Billon Wood—the chief obstacle before Maricourt—and urged the 11th Brigade to swing up, the 43rd Battalion, receiving machine-gun fire from the wood knew the reports to be false.⁶² Eventually the Australians advanced about nightfall—the right (10th Brigade) actually moving first and the left (58th Division) latest. The intense heat had culminated in a thunderstorm. The 39th Battalion moved down through the woods, where a machine-gun fired and then vanished, until Suzanne village and its great château frowned in the dark above. The 11th Brigade crossed the ravine south of Billon Wood.

On the left it could make no



The German main line of resistance north of the Somme this day appears to have been the former H.W.L. III, which here ran west of Billon Wood to east of Suzanne. It was held by a mixture of worn out divisions, 43rd Res., 27th, and 25th, among which was inserted this day part of the 117th.⁶³

By dawn on August 26th the 11th Brigade had finished the second stage. At 9 a.m. that day the 39th Battalion, still on the first objective west of Suzanne, sent patrols through and round that village and found the German posts now just beyond it. At the same time the 11th Brigade, hearing from the 58th Division that British troops were 1,000 yards ahead of the left, on

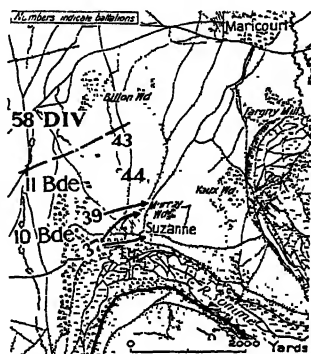
**August 26—
to Vaux Wood**

⁶² Airmen had probably seen isolated groups of British there.

⁶³ Which first met the Australians at Pozieres in 1916.

the road along the Maricourt-Suzanne valley, attempted to reach the third objective across that valley. Fire from old British huts and trenches on the far side held up the left (43rd Bn.) which also could find only Germans on its northern flank.

Meanwhile at 9.10 a.m., General Monash told Gellibrand that the 58th Division had been ordered to take Maricourt which would force a German retirement; the Australian rôle was to be "quiescent" until this was done. But again before this order reached the front, patrols of the 39th had passed through and round Suzanne, and at noon the 37th, in accordance with earlier orders, went through the 39th north of the village to reach the third objective. The companies, sneaking in small groups along banks, old trenches, and sunken roads, were stopped by machine-guns in Murray Wood. On being asked by the left of the 37th for covering fire, Lieut. Le Fevre⁶⁴ of the 39th with



Sergt. Loxton⁶⁵ and a runner crawled to the wood; drove out 30 Germans and a machine-gun crew, who fled up an old communication trench; and, with reinforcements summoned by the runner, bombed these troops back to a main trench between Murray and Vaux Woods. Meanwhile two small patrols of the left company of the 37th under Lieuts. Robertson⁶⁶ and Ayers,⁶⁷ working up a communication trench farther north, had rushed a strong-post and entered the main trench-line. At the same moment, apparently, Le Fevre and his company attacked it. Several hundred Germans bolted across the open to Vaux Wood, chased by the fire of rifles and Lewis guns. Two German batteries in the gully south of the wood galloped off, the Victorians, short of their own ammunition, firing on them with

⁶⁴ Lt. S. Le Fevre, M.C.; 39th Bn. Clerk; of Burwood, Vic.; b. Pyengana, Tas., 23 Nov. 1896. Killed in action, 30 Aug., 1918.

⁶⁵ Sgt. C. Loxton, M.M. (No. 2181; 39th Bn.) Farmer, of Woomelang, Vic.; b. Rosebery, Vic., 19 Aug. 1894.

⁶⁶ Lt. L. J. Robertson, M.C.; 37th Bn. Bank official; of Milawa, Vic.; b. Wangaratta, Vic., 12 May 1892. Died 17 May 1933.

⁶⁷ Lt. A. E. Ayers, M.M.; 37th Bn. Clerk; of Sydney and Cobar, N.S.W.; b. Salt Lake City, U.S.A., 12 Feb. 1895.

German machine-guns of which they captured ten. Farther north light horse scouts and others found that the 58th Division was where its reports had claimed, and the 43rd was now able to cross Suzanne valley and link up the line. The movement was completed during the night.

The uncertainty as to the position north of the Australian flank may be explained by the fact, recorded in the history of the 11th Grenadier Regt. (117th German Divn.), that this regiment counter-attacked in the early morning, met the British attack, and captured an officer, and 81 men. North of it the 117th I.R. is said to have beaten off six attacks on Maricourt. Two German histories⁶⁸ say the thrust of the Australians to Vaux Wood made a retirement that night necessary.

Many of the Germans here were already beyond the limit of endurance. The historian of the 120th I.R. says: "You could no longer call it a 'fight' . . . the enemy brigades rolled up behind a mighty curtain of fire and ceremoniously crushed the motley assembly of German soldiers." The order to withdraw to a new line—from east of Maricourt to Fargny mill (half way between H.W.L. IV and V)—was given to at least some of the German troops by aeroplanes, which also dropped ammunition.

On the British side the 58th Division was ordered to take Maricourt next morning. At the same time the 41st Australian Battalion was to move through the 43rd and reach the Somme bend at Fargny mill. Meanwhile three companies of the 38th lent to the 37th cleared, during the night, the peninsula south-east of Suzanne, and Sergt. McCrohon and four scouts were sent to try to discover the condition of the bridges leading to and from the next peninsula.

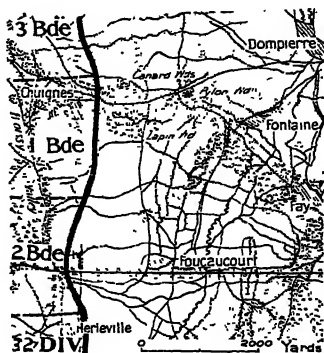
For since the advance of the 3rd Division on August 25th, the 1st Division south of the Somme also had been rapidly pushing forward its flank, affording a chance of cutting off Germans on each peninsula that was passed. On the 24th

South of river, Monash had ordered the 1st and 32nd Divi-
August 25 sions to press forward by patrolling methods while the artillery shelled the German communications to hamper the expected general retirement. But it was not until 4 p.m. on the 25th that a considerable effort was made⁶⁹ to drive back the enemy along the whole front. At most points this was attempted by bombing up the old communication trenches (leading from Froissy valley to the old

⁶⁸ Of the 11th Grenadier Regt. and the 123rd I.R.

⁶⁹ But during the night of the 24th the 12th Bn. again advanced, establishing posts across the open N.E. of Garenné Wood.

French front between Foucaucourt and Dompierre) in which the German posts now were. West of Foucaucourt patrols of the 2nd Brigade, though supported by Stokes mortars,⁷⁰ were stopped at 200-300 yards by bombing blocks (of the 122nd I.R.) strongly defended by machine-guns and trench-mortars. The 4th Battalion, seeing German shells bursting in Lapin Woods, sent a patrol through it; but the 3rd Battalion's patrols, after working up Chuignes gully and through Canard Woods, were stopped by intense fire,⁷¹ followed by one of the heaviest barrages that occurred during this offensive. The 12th Battalion, by stiff fighting, pushed up the communication trenches north of Chuignes gully. On the right Lieut. Terry, getting out of the trench to direct his bombers, was killed. But Lieut. Graham of the 11th, whose company was supporting Terry's, led them on, gaining bend after bend of the trench to a point 1,100 yards due east of the start.



German accounts say that a breach was made in the line of the 80th I.R. and greatly troubled the 478th farther south, which had to withdraw its flank half a mile. The 87th I.R. (in reserve since relief by the 148th) was warned for counter-attack, but later part of the 152nd I.R. (41st Divn.) was put in there.

The left of the 12th from its new-dug posts tried to cross the plateau in face of machine-guns which the thin barrage could not suppress. Its preparations had been seen and it lost heavily. Lieut. Dollery and his platoon in more broken ground reached Earl's Wood in the gully east of the plateau,⁷² and scared the German machine-gunners out of Olympia Wood, but were mistaken for Germans by Tulloch's company of the 11th and sniped at and shelled. They stayed in shell-holes in Olympia Wood amid the crashing trees until dusk. Meanwhile the 9th Battalion, by arrangement with the 3rd Division,

⁷⁰ Lt. N. F. Day (Geelong, Vic.) 2nd L.T.M. Bty., was mortally wounded.

⁷¹ From the 478th and 80th I.R.'s at Pylon Wood and the attached trench-mortars and batteries.

⁷² Earl's Wood lay next to Olympia Wood but on the western side of the gully.

had cleared the enemy from the southern edge of the Somme to beyond Cappy.⁷³

In this area when the 3rd Aust. Divn. took Bray the reinforcements from the 41st Divn. had been withdrawn to guard the bridges and hill slopes behind the 479th then threatened from the north. Later, during the night of the 24th, the Germans had drawn back their main line of resistance behind Cappy to the line Eclusier-E. edge Olympia Wood-Fontaine road. Shortly after noon their forward posts were forced back from Cappy, fire from north of the river being troublesome. It was afterwards reported that the British (evidently Dollery's platoon) had reached the main line of resistance at Olympia Wood, and the Germans heavily shelled the wood. XI Corps H.Q. announced that part of the 2nd Guard Divn. was marching up to Becquincourt and could be called on if necessary. But at 9.50 p.m. came an order to withdraw to the line east of Eclusier and west of Dompierre. (The successive positions to which the Germans were thus forced differed from the pre-arranged ones.) The 21st Divn. was now holding the line with troops of the 41st and 243rd Divns. and the 107th with troops of the 243rd and 108th.

At dusk the German artillery in this sector fired a heavy barrage of smoke and gas shell, and it was afterwards found that their infantry had withdrawn. The 11th and 10th Battalions were ordered to relieve the 12th and 9th and attack at midnight. The thunderstorm and the vagueness of the position⁷⁴ at Olympia Wood delayed the relief.

August 26

Eventually the 11th and 10th advanced at 6 a.m. on the 26th, the 11th through communication trenches, the 10th over the open.⁷⁵ By evening the 10th was approaching the

⁷³ This was done by a company under Lt. J. W. King (Duchess, Q'land), Capt. Hubert Wilkins, the Official Photographer, going with the foremost patrol (*see Vol. XII, Plate 532*). King, whose company commander, Capt. T. W. Farmer (Ashgrove, Q'land) had been severely wounded, reconnoitred the village, first with Maj. H. James (Perth, W.A.) acting-commander of the 9th, and later by himself. He then, by leave of Brig-Gen. Bennett, advanced through the village instead of round it, as previously ordered. Two Lewis gunners had been sent to the northern bank (just captured by the 40th Bn.) to fire across into the dugout entrances and scare any inmates. The Somme Canal was almost empty, the Germans having blown up the locks. King's party went as far as a quarry several hundred yards beyond Cappy and sent patrols to left and right. A number of German machine-guns were presently set up on the other edge of the quarry and the Australian barrage dropped behind the patrol, which sheltered from it at a bank just too low for the German machine-gunners to see. One man curled up to sleep saying, "Wake me up when the barrage passes." These Queenslanders were afterwards withdrawn, one being killed in the process.

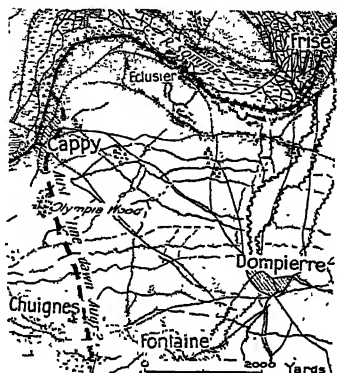
⁷⁴ Tulloch's company, for example, had pushed on and was digging in a third of a mile beyond Olympia Wood when, very late, the order reached it. It had to be brought back, given a hot meal, and sent round to the other flank.

⁷⁵ Neligan's method was to send forward patrols by stages, and at each stage dribble the platoons up to them. The 11th met opposition at Dompierre sugar factory and had to ask for the support of artillery. After two shots thirty Germans ran towards Dompierre. Both battalions halted at this stage, and had a meal. Neligan brought up "O" Battery R.H.A. east of Olympia Wood and other batteries of the supporting artillery (5th and 16th Bdes. R.H.A.) moved up. Both battalions advanced again, the 10th about noon outflanking stubbornly held German machine-gun posts at Justice and October 30 Woods. On the left, a light horse patrol rode beside the river to Eclusier. By 6 p.m. the 10th Bn. was through Nameless and Virgin Woods, and the 11th north of Dompierre sugar factory.

old French front between Frise and Dompierre, the 1st Division's flank being thus again slightly ahead of the 3rd Division's; but the 11th Battalion was held up in old trenches near Dompierre, which was recognised as too difficult for a tired brigade to attack. Farther south the 1st Brigade had pushed through communication trenches to beyond Fontaine-les-Cappy; but astride the Roman road the 2nd Brigade and the 32nd Division south of it had for two nights been intensely shelled with gas, great numbers of men being incapacitated.⁷⁶ The troops were in no condition to press back the strong German posts covering Foucaucourt.

General Monash, whose front was now shortened by the French relieving the 4th Division opposite Chaumes, had decided to overcome the obstacles ahead by inserting two of his divisions, 5th and 2nd, in place of the 1st.⁷⁷ The first intention was that they should attack on August 27th, covered by ten brigades of field artillery. But this order, issued on the 25th, was cancelled next day, Haig's policy being that the Third and First Armies, which attacked east of Arras on August 26th, should now undertake the main effort on the British front. The 5th and 2nd Divisions were therefore instructed to press only with "aggressive patrols."

Meanwhile, shortly before midnight on the 26th arrived news that German officers captured that day by the French said that their front was to be withdrawn six or eight kilometres that night. A retirement to the Somme was evidently imminent.



⁷⁶ On the night of the 24th the Germans, probably firing away their dumps, poured gas shell into Froissy valley and its woods north and south of the Roman road. The great heat next day volatilised the oil and the gas drifted around until the thunderstorm on the night of Aug. 25 cleared the air. A second shoot that night was much less effective. The 6th Bn. had over 120 men affected, the 8th, 80. The 6th Bn.'s companies were reduced to an average of 21 men. The 96th Bde. (32nd Div.) had 1,000 casualties. Capt. A. S. Cockburn (Ashfield, N.S.W.), medical officer of the 6th, worked until he could not see.

⁷⁷ He thus still had 4 divisions in line and 2 in reserve.

MONT ST. QUENTIN

A detailed map of the First Battle of the Marne (September 1914). The map shows the positions of the German and French armies. The German First Army is at the top, with its right flank near Arras and its left flank near Cambrai. The French Third and Fourth Armies are in the center, with the French First Army at the bottom. The Marne River is shown flowing from the east towards the French lines. The map also shows the positions of the German and French armies at the start of the battle, with the German army advancing towards the French lines. Key locations marked include Arras, Cambrai, Spa, and Reims. The map also shows the positions of the German and French armies at the start of the battle, with the German army advancing towards the French lines.

In the first blow of the new Arras offensive, on August 26, the Canadians took Monchy le Preux with slight loss, while British troops¹ drove out on the flanks. But even here, in the farther thrust to force the Drocourt and Hindenburg Lines,

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Haig was determined not to risk heavy loss unless Generals Horne (First Army) and Currie (Canadian Corps) were convinced they had sufficient strength to push through and follow up the blow. As for Fourth Army, though Haig had recently directed that the time had come to "take risks," he apparently now told Rawlinson that, having attracted to itself the German reserves, Fourth Army need not hurry the expulsion of these Germans from the devastated ground in the bend of the Somme; the armies farther north were to bring about that.

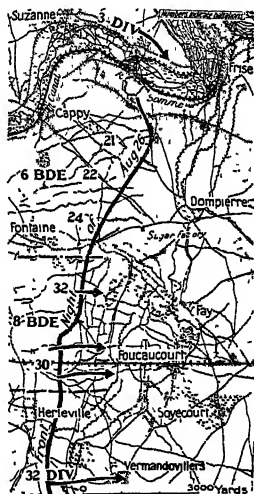
Rawlinson passed these instructions to Monash. But Monash in the flush of victory was convinced that Rawlinson did not realise what striking power Australian infantry still possessed even after eighteen days' continuous fighting and though no tanks could now assist. So, having been directed to keep touch with the enemy, Monash, as he himself says,² seized on this instruction "to justify an aggressive policy." He ordered the 5th and 2nd Divisions to keep up continual pressure and advance by infiltration but avoid fighting that might involve heavy losses. Meanwhile the 3rd Division, he told General Gellibrand, would be left to push on north of the Somme without relief; it must keep pace with the others but would be given a good rest later. The 4th Division at Lihons was on August 24th relieved by the 34th French Division and went into reserve near Corbie.

Each of the two centre divisions of the Australian Corps now held its front with one brigade, and these two brigades—
8th (5th Divn.) and 6th (2nd Divn.)—coming
"Keeping touch," in on the night of August 26th at once began
August 27 probing with strong fighting patrols the old
battlefield ahead. It was a week of generally
fair, warm weather, with drifting clouds and almost daily
showers. August 27th was showery. The 32nd Battalion (left
of the 8th Brigade) working up a trench found a copse unoccu-
pied, and located and rushed a German post beyond it. But
close ahead of the right battalion (30th) the Germans held in
some strength the old saps around the mounds that had once
been Foucaucourt, astride of the Roman road. Lieut.-Col. Street
(30th) therefore arranged with Lieut.-Col. Davies (32nd) that

² *The Australian Victories in France in 1918*, p. 166.

at 2 p.m. the companies of the two battalions near the north of the village should work together round its northern side.

But meanwhile patrols from the right of the 32nd British Division farther south had penetrated nearly a mile between Foucaucourt and Chaumes meeting only a few German posts. Prisoners taken by the French said that the Germans were carrying out a withdrawal. General Hobbs (5th Divn.) therefore ordered stronger measures. Foucaucourt would be heavily bombarded with high explosive and smoke shells from 1 to 1.30 p.m., after which the 30th would attack it. But the order arrived too late to reach the companies in time. The bombardment, which was intense, aroused all Germans in the area, and when at 2 p.m. the left company of the 30th (Capt. Savage³) worked forward, heavy machine-gun fire met it. Working through saps, however, by 3.30 it had thrust north of the ruins. Parties of the right company (Lieut. Wells⁴) then tried to attack frontally over the open. They were immediately swept by machine-gun fire.⁵ Continuing their advance through trenches they soon came hard up against the opposing machine-guns and the advance seemed to be stopped, when a corporal, J Ford,⁶ saying "This is no bloody good to me," rushed one machine-gunner and captured a post. In face of direct fire from two field-guns the parties worked on, helped by two platoons of Royal Scots (32nd Divn.) who had found their way up the old trench-maze. Other posts were rushed, 35 prisoners and 16 machine-guns being captured. At the eastern edge of



³ Capt. C. D. Savage, M.C.; 30th Bn. Typograph operator; of Clayfield, Q'land; b. Thursday I., 1 Oct. 1890.

⁴ Lt. H. J. Wells, M.C.; 30th Bn. Chartered accountant; of Newcastle, N.S.W.; b. Wellington, N.S.W., 27 Mar. 1897.

⁵ The company had only some 80 men of whom about 20 were hit. Savage's company eventually lost as many.

⁶ L.-Sgt. J. Ford, D.C.M. (No. 883; 30th Bn.). Vaudeville artist; of Sydney; b. Goulburn, N.S.W., 31 Dec. 1896. During the same advance two machine-guns were stalked and rushed by Cpl. T. W. Ford and two companions. (He belonged to Glen Innes and Forest Lodge, N.S.W.; died 4 Nov. 1934.)

Foucaucourt the troops were very heavily shelled—it looked as if the Germans were firing away their stocks. Farther north the 24th (6th Bde.) had worked up to Dompierre Sugar Factory but been cleared out of it by a vicious shelling followed by an attempt to cut them off. Here only half a mile ahead of yesterday's line, but elsewhere a mile and a half, the posts stopped for the night. Till the small hours German machine-guns fired close ahead but the dawn patrols, ordered to press on with the advance, found the enemy gone.

Whether or not the Eighteenth German Army, facing the French south of Australian Corps, began its withdrawal on Aug. 26, that of Second Army (facing the British Fourth) did not begin until the night of the 27th. The forcing back of the southern flank of the 54th Corps north of the Somme by the 3rd Aust. Divn. had caused the XI Corps south of the river also to withdraw its main line on the night of the 26th to the old trenches behind Frise; but farther south the 21st and 107th Divns. had still kept their outpost-line west of Dompierre and Foucaucourt.⁷ At Foucaucourt the forward zone was held by the 122nd Fusilier Regt. thinly extended; in the main line, immediately behind the village, were the 137th I.R. and 265th R.I.R.⁸ German accounts say that the companies of the 122nd, though down to 30 men, held the attack till half a company of their right was rushed. Withdrawal was then ordered, and about 5 p.m. the two rear regiments (helped by a gun of the 8th/243rd F.A.R.) found the enemy approaching and stopped him 300-500 yards from the main position. The general retirement in this sector really began at dusk, engineers coming up to blow up roads and bridges and lay tank mines. The roads however were crowded with waggons endeavouring to clear all baggage and stores in the short summer night. Leaving a few parties to deceive their opponents the forward battalions withdrew through sister battalions already holding the new main line several miles eastward.

North of the Somme a voluntary retreat had not yet been made, but for the second morning in succession the 3rd Australian Division now forced its way into a main line on which the exhausted Germans there were trying to stand. To these actions the narrative must now turn.

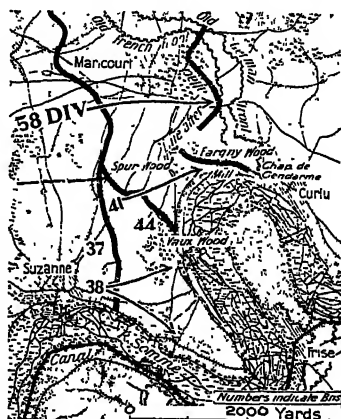
It will be recalled that on August 26th the Germans still held the Maricourt plateau between the Bray-Montauban gully and the Somme. At dawn on the 27th the 58th Division was to drive them from Maricourt and the 41st Australian Battalion

⁷ The IV German Corps on the French front also maintained its outpost-line around Chaumes.

⁸ The 122nd really belonged to the 243rd Div. and the 137th and 265th to the 108th. The 265th was now only 339 strong with 9 heavy and 8 light machine-guns.

North of
Somme,
August 27

to seize the Somme bend at Fargny Mill. The 58th, though now very weak, took Maricourt and the old French line east of it, the main objective, but strong fire prevented it from penetrating by "exploitation" the old German line, and its right failed to capture Fargny Wood 1,000 yards farther west.⁹ The 41st Battalion earlier in the night had made, together with the 44th, a silent advance from the line reached by the 37th to Vaux Wood, from which the Germans bolted as it approached. At 2 a.m. it received orders for the dawn attack, to start at 4.55. For neither attack could there be any reconnaissance, and the second was made under a barrage diagonal to the objective.¹⁰ After fighting through Spur Wood the left company reached the bank south of Fargny Wood and the quarry east of it, and thrust past the river bend to Fargny Mill and the steep scrubby cliff (Chapeau de Gendarme) just before Curlu. All day the 41st, precariously wedged itself on these banks, with the river behind and the Germans in Fargny Wood and the long spur from Maricourt to Hem in front, and tussled by means of snipers and Stokes mortars with the enemy on the slopes above. A German machine-gun post persistently enfilading the right was suppressed by a Tasmanian, L.-Corpl. Gordon,¹¹ who shot the gunner and captured an officer and 10 men, and constantly made



⁹ Maj.-Gen. F. W. Ramsay, 58th Div., on the ground that his right brigade had only 300 rifles, had wanted the Australians to seize this, but they would not agree to extend beyond the quarry south-east of it. This decision, however, was confirmed too late to allow Ramsay to supply the necessary troops for the operation.

¹⁰ The 41st advanced on a two company front with its third company supported by one from the 42nd to guard its left and its fourth behind its right. The barrage was laid by the 7th Bde. (3rd Div. Arty.) and the 201st Bde. R.F.A. The ammunition supply in this hilly country was too difficult for the 4-horse teams; Maj. A. B. Sandford (Sydney), 3rd D.A.C., therefore supplied 6-horse teams. This day the 290th and 291st Bdes. R.F.A. returned to the 58th Div., the 3rd Div. receiving instead the 250th and 251st (50th Div.).

¹¹ L.-Cpl. B. S. Gordon, V.C., M.M. (No. 23; 41st Bn.). Cooper's machinist; of Beaconsfield, Tas.; b. Launceston, Tas., 1891. The Victoria Cross was awarded to him for his actions this day.

his way into Fargny Wood, taking in all 60 prisoners and 6 machine-guns.

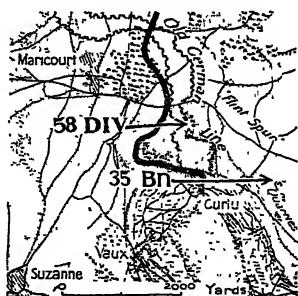
German narratives show that the attack on Maricourt and Fargny Mill was met by a collection of exhausted troops belonging, east of Maricourt, to the 25th Divn. and, farther south, to the 117th.¹² During the night Maricourt and Vaux Wood had been abandoned. The ridge between Maricourt and the 41st had been held by the 11th Grenadier Regt. (117th Divn.) whose remnants now fell back on to the long ridge (Feuersteinberg or "Flint Spur") above Curlu already held by an emergency garrison of the 157th I.R. (withdrawn from Vaux Wood) and the still more reduced 123rd Gren. Regt. (27th Divn.). The 123rd was sent to Fargny Mill but found it firmly held by Australians and was stopped east of it.

That evening the 11th Australian Brigade was relieved by the 9th. The 58th Division was ordered to continue its advance

next day (Aug. 28th) seizing at dawn the long "Flint" ridge. On its flank the 35th Battalion

would capture two quarries on the hillside beyond Curlu. The 10th Brigade (whose expected rest-days were now cancelled) would act on the right of the 9th, clear another peninsula,¹³ cross the bridges south of Curlu, and take up a front on the right of the 9th ready for a three-mile advance

beside the river to Cléry where the Somme made its right-angle bend from the south. General Gellibrand agreed to take over temporarily 500 yards of front at Fargny Mill from the 58th Division, allowing the 35th to advance around the river behind a straight barrage. The 58th Division was reported to have taken Fargny Wood but Capt. Coghill of the 35th could find none of its



troops there on his left when at 3.30 a.m. on the 28th he assembled the flank company for the attack. Fortunately the Germans had withdrawn from the wood. The commander of the 35th, Col. White, went to headquarters of the 174th Brigade and found the commander of the British flank company just asking his way to the starting point. The barrage again fell at

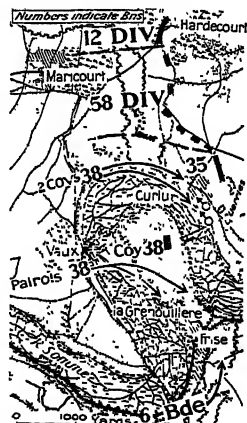
¹² Elements of the 43rd Res. Div. also were present. It was withdrawn on the 28th and on Sep. 10 broken up to reinforce the 2nd Guard, 79th Res. and other divisions.

¹³ On Aug. 26 the 38th had cleared the peninsula south-east of Bray and found the Eclusier bridges broken.

4.55 a.m.¹⁴ and following it the 35th cleared after sharp fighting the Chapeau de Gendarme, taking 60 men of the 157th I.R. and 8 machine-guns. When the barrage ended patrols reached the quarry east of Curlu but machine-guns kept them from the quarry south-east of the village. A post was, however, reported to have been established farther south beyond the village, near the river. As the 58th Division still could not be found on the left Col. White again visited the British brigadier. As on the previous day the 58th had been stopped at its main objective, but one of its battalion commanders now led his men along the Maricourt road where they formed a flank to the 35th.

The 10th Brigade had now to come in on the right. During the morning a company of the 38th Battalion, helped by one from the 3rd Pioneer under Lieut. Larkin,¹⁵ crossed the Somme at the causeway at Vaux, where only one of a series of three bridges had been demolished,¹⁶ but found the bridges on the far side of the peninsula destroyed,¹⁷ and the bank opposite Curlu commanded by German machine-guns. These guns were where the flank posts of the 35th had been believed to be, immediately east of the village. The Somme bank there was unapproachable except by dribbling men in two's and three's.

But meanwhile at 3.30 p.m. two companies had been sent round the river bend by Fargny Mill. Reaching the ruins of Curlu they met, in the riverside orchard, withering fire



¹⁴ The British commander arranged for it to lie for 15 minutes well ahead of the infantry's assembly point, and then advance at the rate of 100 yards in 6 minutes. It was too slow for the 35th whose men tended to run into it. The 3rd Div.'s artillery now comprised the 7th and 8th A.F.A. and 250th and 251st R.F.A. Bdes.

¹⁵ Capt. H. W. Larkin, 3rd Pion. Bn. Engineer; of Kew, Vic.; b. Beechworth, Vic., 27 Jan. 1890.

¹⁶ In the early morning the 38th from the slope above Vaux shot at a party of Germans sent down in a boat to finish the job. Lt. Larkin's company (attached to the 9th Bde., together with the 10th Fld. Coy.) had been ordered to repair the bridges. He reached them before the attack and ahead of the infantry, and cut the wires leading to mines beneath two of them. When the 38th crossed, the boat with a dead German was floating beside one bridge.

¹⁷ Farther south on the peninsula Lt. W. L. Bogle (Melbourne) reached the northern houses of Frise, which was still German, and Lt. J. C. Davis (Moonee Ponds, Vic.; died 5 Oct. 1939) the bridge at La Grenouillère.

from the positions beyond the village that they believed to have been captured. Lewis gunners who tried to suppress it were hit one after another. Lieut. Riddell¹⁸ was mortally wounded. A corporal, A. Gilhooley,¹⁹ working round the ruins to rush the main post²⁰ was killed as he crossed the road. But the company on the peninsula²¹ opened sharp covering fire; the left company in the village worked round next to the 35th and Lieut. Poole²² seized the German post at the bridgehead. The German strong-post east of the village had to withdraw. Pioneers and engineers immediately set to work on Curlu causeway.

The attack had fallen on the left flank of the 11th Gren. Regt., and a remnant of the much-tried 123rd Gren. Regt. It was the sturdy Württembergers of the 123rd who, reinforced by two companies of engineers, held the posts east of Curlu. It was the regiment's last day on the Somme, and the divisional commander wrote to the King of Württemberg: "During the whole day Curlu was the only place where enemy pressure was strong, and it is remarkable that the 123rd Gren. Regt. had the strength to resist it."

South of the Somme the 6th Brigade, having been ordered to steal what ground it could before the 3rd Division's advance north of the river, had reached by 2.40 a.m. on the 28th the old front lines south-west of Frise; but there the left battalion (21st) ran against some German force, and in feeling out after daylight was stopped by many machine-guns. During the morning Capt. Moss's company of the reserve battalion (23rd) was sent up. The line troops this day had ample supporting artillery, a brigade of it to each attacking battalion; but some of the artillery commanders were hampered by having to keep touch with the infantry brigadiers—when they were allowed to work with the battalions direct their help became prompt. Between 3 and 4 p.m., after the artillery had shelled Frise and the trench-network behind it for half an hour, Moss's company

¹⁸ Only son of Mme. Maggie Stirling, the Australian singer (Lt. R. B. Riddell; 38th Bn. Warehouseman; of Toorak, Vic.; b. Toorak, 1890. Died of wounds, 10 Sep. 1918).

¹⁹ Cpl. A. Gilhooley (No. 890; 38th Bn.). Bricklayer; of Brunswick, Vic.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 27 July 1894. Killed in action, 28 Aug., 1918.

²⁰ Four machine-guns on a high bank at the old septic tanks.

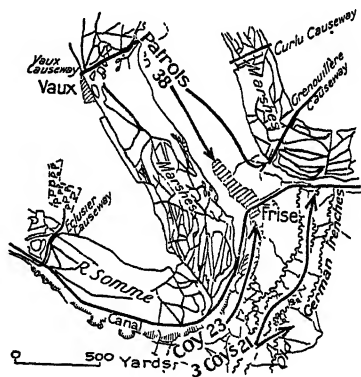
²¹ Now under Lt. N. W. W. Sandiford (Wycheproof, Vic.; died 13 July 1926); Capt. L. J. Beattie (East Brunswick, Vic.; died 16 July 1932) had been wounded at Vaux causeway.

²² Lt. H. F. Poole, 38th Bn. Departmental manager; of St. Kilda, Vic.; b. Flemington, Vic., 29 Apr. 1887.

moved through the ruins, a few Germans bolting before them, while Gawler's company of the 21st supported by Sullivan's and by a Stokes mortar, bombed up the old lines beyond, where by 6 p.m. they reached the river, having captured 50 Germans and 15 machine-guns.

These were partly from the 478th I.R., the old garrison, which was to have retired through the supporting Divisions but had not yet received the order, and partly of the 4th Guard Grenadier (Empress Augusta's Regiment), who said that their Division, the 2nd Guard—a force comparatively strong and fresh—was holding a new main line a mile in rear, through Herbécourt.

On the rest of the Corps front farther south patrols at dawn had found the enemy gone and had moved on to get touch with him, going over the open moorland until sharply fired on—the companies coming up to the patrols at each convenient stage, and the patrols then walking on again. At the sites of old villages—now grass covered mounds surrounded by skeletons of broken trees—Estrées, Dompierre, Becquincourt—patrols of German infantry and cyclists were met and outflanked, and by evening the patrols came up against the forward posts of the new line at Herbécourt, Assevillers, and Belloy. The 32nd (W.A.) captured 18 of the 2nd Guard Division at Assevillers, but both the 30th and 32nd were worn out and Brig.-Genl. Tivey sent forward the 31st and 29th to relieve them. The 6th Brigade also was so tired that the 18th Battalion (5th Bde.) was lent to relieve its left where Mereau-court Wood had yet to be cleared. The tired battalions were told they must take Herbécourt that night—the 7th and 5th Brigades would pass through in the morning.



For General Monash had decided upon a most vigorous stroke. It was almost certain that next day the Germans would withdraw behind the Somme, and prisoners at this stage constantly spoke of having heard that the withdrawal was only a

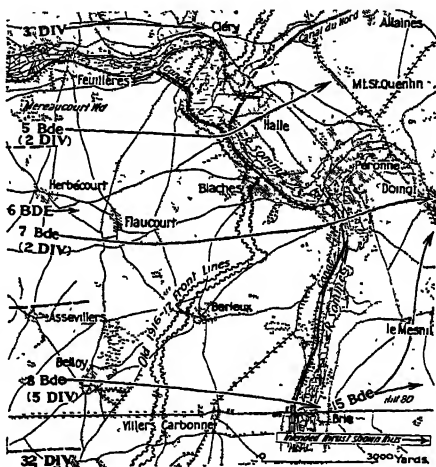
stage in an intended retirement to the Hindenburg Line. Despite

Monash's plan

Rawlinson's statement that there was no object in hastening the Germans' withdrawal here, Monash had decided to follow them so closely that he might not only hurry them off the Somme bridgeheads at Péronne but rush two Australian brigades across the bridges on to two main heights a couple of miles beyond, north and south of Péronne, particularly the prominent hill a mile north of it, Mont St. Quentin. Its capture would almost certainly force the Germans at once from Péronne and would threaten the Somme line south of it. At a conference during this afternoon at the 2nd Division's headquarters in Cérisy Gully he directed that,

upon the capture by "aggressive patrols" of the high ground and bridges west of the Somme at Péronne, the 5th Division crossing about Brie should forthwith seize Hill 80 and the 2nd, crossing about Halle, would capture Mont St. Quentin. As the front of the 2nd Division widened at Frise, two brigades—7th and 5th—would now be used there. In

the 5th Division the 15th Brigade under its thrusting commander, Elliott, would keep close behind the 8th which would seize the Brie crossings.²³ While the conference was sitting, observers of the 11th Brigade north of the river, saw German transport and guns being cleared, often at the gallop, from behind that front as well, and the heavy artillery accordingly pounded the narrow valley at Cléry through which they must pass.



²³ After Aug. 8 the Somme bridges had been heavily bombed by the Air Force but it was known they were much less damaged than had at first been believed.

The 6th Brigade's companies pushed beyond Herbécourt²⁴ in the night and when the fresh parties moved out at dawn of the 29th no Germans were at first to be seen—
August 29—
the bridgeheads and the same happened north of the river. There the infantry had probed over the long "Flint Ridge" and past Hem when a squadron of the 13th Light Horse arrived, hurriedly sent up to find touch with the enemy.²⁵ South of the river the 18th Battalion during the night had cleared Mereaucourt Wood, its parties arranging to keep touch by the simple expedient of "making a noise."²⁶ It had reached Feuillères, where the Germans withdrawing northwards across the river blew up the bridge. At dawn, as the numerous files of weak platoons in artillery formation with patrols ahead crossed the undulating moorland, a rare shell pecked the heath near important cross-roads. Two-gun sections of artillery attached to the battalions moved very close in rear—indeed one section of Royal Horse Artillery was at the cross-roads east of Flaucourt waiting for the 28th Battalion to come up to it. The advance was swift.²⁷ Presently a few distant machine-guns chattered at random, but no serious shooting met the movement until it passed Belloy,²⁸ high in its woods, and the mounds of Barleux in the hollow beyond, and neared the last stretch of bare brown plateau behind which lay the Somme. A train hidden by the hills was whistling there, the feather of its steam waving at the gully's end. On the height to the left appeared Germans, and the 29th, 26th and 28th Battalions when astride the gully beyond Barleux were met by very heavy fire from machine-gunners in old saps west of Biaches and the Maisonette. Platoons in the fringe of the fire moved on

²⁴ Patrols of the 23rd, relieving the 21st, went nearly two miles beyond.

²⁵ Strangely enough Gen. Godley, then temporarily commanding III Corps, had secured the help of his XXII Corps Cavalry Regt., mostly New Zealanders but including a remnant of the old 4th Light Horse. They as well as British cavalry were used for ascertaining the situation; the 58th Div.'s records state that they were "of the greatest value."

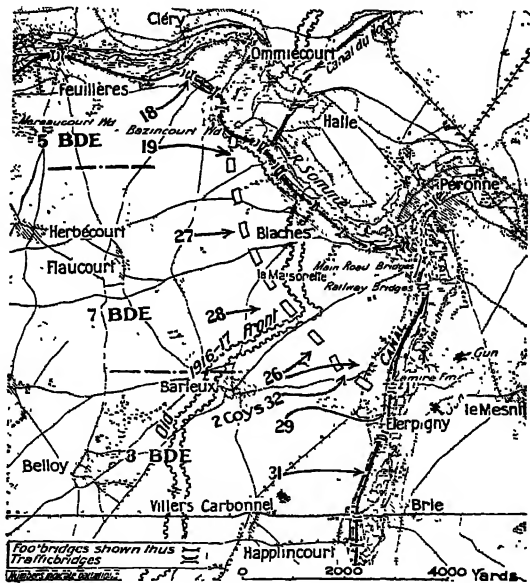
²⁶ Even so they lost contact. One machine-gun post offered opposition and was outflanked by a party under L.-Cpl. B. S. Mackay (Sydney); according to one account a number of Germans lay low and surrendered to a field ambulance next day.

²⁷ The engineers removed a large number of contact mines intended for tanks. Where the Roman road entered a gully near Villers-Carbonnel a retiring German field-gun had evidently been driven over one by mistake; the team lay dead on the road. Engineers also tested the wells in every village and removed mines from some of the bridges. Several big craters had been blown in the streets of Villers-Carbonnel.

²⁸ Here we passed the huts of a German headquarters camouflaged under netting. On the table in one was chalked: "Tomy, you are the meaning to win? As you believe." I think else. You will loose it and that is the trool! Good by!"

through old saps, and by rushes, and part of the 32nd²⁹ worked towards the southern flank of the German posts. The enemy's artillery was laying a barrage ahead of the position but in face of it the line of the 7th Brigade rapidly advanced across the open and swarmed over the posts—"a very fine piece of work," wrote Capt. Read³⁰ of the 29th who watched it. The German defence line on the crest was overrun.

But as soon as the Australians began to pass over the crest and descend to the river, coming in view at one instant of the old town of Péronne below with its moat, ramparts, and battlemented towers, the three wooded hills behind it, the wide brow and scrubby pate of Mont St. Quentin to the north and rolling hills to the south—at that moment German batteries on the farther side plastered the slope with shell bursts. On the 2nd



German position—broken white line.

Division's front the woods farther down were still held by machine-gunners. Rushing one of these guns Capt. Bice (27th) was shot through the eye. Pointing out another, after being wounded by it, Lieut. Cecil Healy³¹ (19th) a champion swimmer was hit again and killed.

²⁹ The 32nd was in support but two companies had been put into a gap between the 29th and 26th.

³⁰ Capt. C. H. Read, M.C.; 29th Bn. Orchardist; of Mt. Mercer, Vic.; b. Sorell, Tas., 23 Dec. 1888.

³¹ Lt. C. Healy; 19th Bn. Commercial traveller and journalist; of Darling Point and Darlinghurst, N.S.W.; b. Darlinghurst, N.S.W., 28 Nov. 1882. Killed in action, 29 Aug. 1918.

But on the right down the gully past Barleux the left half of the 8th Brigade and the right of the 7th rushing through machine-gun fire reached the canal by 9 o'clock to see Germans blow up the main bridge at Eterpigny. Another crowd of Germans running before the 2nd Division was trying to cross a small wooden bridge farther north. The 29th put Lewis guns on them and then scrambled over a broken bridge across the Somme canal to cut them off. But beyond the canal it found its way barred by other branches of the river extending for 500 yards eastwards with marshy islands between. The 26th following these Germans captured a score and crossing the same wooden bridge placed three posts beyond. No sooner had this been done than two German field-guns were cantered down from the opposite hills towards the river, one half a mile north the other half a mile south of the bridge. Their crews unlimbered; the teams galloped to cover; each gun fired some fifteen rounds into the bridge. While they were doing so a battery supporting the 5th Division, not realising that its own men were at the river, barraged the same bridge. The Germans limbered up and galloped away, but the shelling from behind continued. The engineers were already examining the crossing and Lieut. Mott,³² 7th Field Company was hit so severely that his company commander, Maj. Webb, had great difficulty in getting him back over the broken bridge. The infantry here were withdrawn to the main objective laid down in their orders, 400 yards west of the stream.

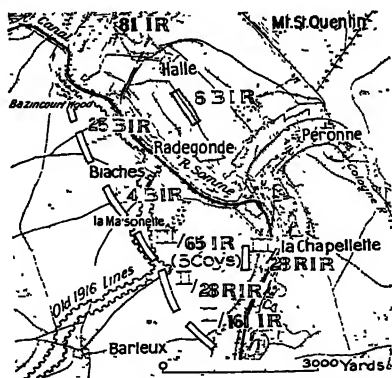
Farther north, when the 26th drove through to the river, the Germans facing the 28th and 27th opposite Péronne retired over the main road and railway bridges there. The explosions that at most points followed their crossing lifted more than the girders and timbers—they raised a weight from the minds of many Australians who, though racing to stop that very occurrence with a view to frontally attacking across those narrow passages, had naturally been dreading the coming task.

The 19th Battalion, reaching the Somme banks at Bazincourt Woods, expected to find a crossing where the half-completed Canal du Nord curved northwards out of the Somme Canal. Here a traffic bridge was found, unfinished. A footbridge

³² Lt. J. W. Mott, M.C., D.C.M.; 7th Fld. Coy. Engrs. Licensed surveyor; of South Brisbane; b. New Farm, Q'land, 14 June 1891. A photograph of the marshes is in *Vol. XII*, plate 534.

beside it could be crossed, but the marshes for 500 yards beyond could be passed only on a narrow causeway which was broken and was under the muzzles of German machine-guns in Halle. Farther north the 18th Battalion in the dull light came undetected down the slope to Ommiécourt peninsula jutting into the Somme bend opposite Cléry and found a light bridge of floats 100 yards from the destroyed lock. Three companies crossed and lay in the cutting through which the canal crossed the neck of the peninsula, but every attempt to advance to Ommiécourt was stopped by the machine-gun fire from Cléry and the semicircle of heights beyond. Two miles farther west, however, was the Feuillères crossing, and Capt. Steele³³ of the 5th Field Company had a section of engineers at work there by mid-morning.³⁴

German histories show that on Aug. 28 the German front line troops had begun their withdrawal at dusk. The northernmost division, 21st, from Mereaucourt Wood, transferred itself from the southern to the northern bank,³⁵ replacing there the 27th and forming a new front through Cléry, with its right 2,000 yards north of the Somme bend and its left (81st I.R.) holding Ommiécourt village and bridges and the Somme bend east of them. South of this the 2nd Guard Divn. was withdrawn into army reserve at Allaines two miles east of the Somme bend; but as the High Command laid great importance on retaining possession of the bridges leading to Péronne the 14th Bavarian Divn., which had received a short rest after its mauling at Moreuil on Aug. 8, had dug in on the hills west of the river. The Guards retired through it and the 185th Divn. next on the south left a composite force on Maisonette heights to hold that half of the bridgehead. Farther south the 5th Bavarian, 38th, and other divisions had withdrawn to behind the river. It was against these troops



³³ Brig. C. S. Steele, M.C., V.D. 5th Fld. Coy. Engrs. C.R.E. 6th Div. A.I.F. 1939-40. C.E. 1st Aust. Corps, 1940. Assistant engineer; of Toorak, Vic., b. Canterbury, Vic., 30 Sep. 1892.

³⁴ Steele and Lt. F. S. Croker (Heidelberg, Vic.) went on to the canal at Ommiécourt peninsula. Here Lt. A. R. Parkinson (Toowoomba, Q'land) and another section were set to make a traffic bridge. Lt. H. P. Wiumson (Neutral Bay, N.S.W.) was put on to the crossing near the Canal du Nord opposite Halle.

³⁵ By the bridges at Feuillères and Ommiécourt. Feuillères bridge was blown up prematurely about 8.30 p.m., after the III/80th I.R. had crossed; the II Bn. had to cross with the rear guard at Ommiécourt.

holding the bridgehead as shown in the marginal sketch that the 7th Bde. and adjoining troops had come. The Bavarian regiments averaged only 350 strong—the two strongest were placed west of the Somme and the other (200 men) east of the river at Halle. The 185th Divn. had three battalions in line and one in support. The Bavarians were shaken troops, and when they were attacked in front and a bridge at Halle was prematurely blown up, apparently cutting off direct communication with the rear, they fell back to the river; though the divisional storm company was thrown in and fought for an hour in Bazincourt Wood nothing could restore the position—the Bavarians retired over the bridges in the next sector.

The posts of the 185th Divn. were thus outflanked on the north, and meanwhile their southern flank formed by the II/161st I.R. had also been driven back. The guns covering them were firing short,³⁶ and here too the troops were depressed by the fear of being cut off. They too fell back, crossing the Péronne railway bridge already under Australian machine-gun fire. The machine-guns of the II/65th I.R. and III/28th R.I.R. then barred the passage over the bridge. In the Somme bend the 21st Divn. successfully held Ommiécourt village and bridge.

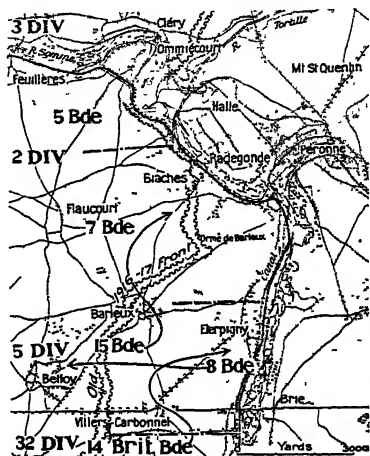
The two leading battalions of the 5th Brigade were thus for the moment held up in their task of crossing the river and the two behind them from attempting to pass through and rush Mont St. Quentin.³⁷ But Brig.-Genl. Elliott of the 15th Brigade prepared to make the southern thrust, through the 8th Brigade at Brie. Going forward to the Orme de Barleux high above the river he summoned his battalion commanders, and standing on the old parapets with maps and field glasses, in full view from Péronne and valley and heights for miles around, planned the intended advance. In mid-afternoon came word that his brigade itself was to force the crossing, the 8th building a bridge for it at Happlincourt. But after dark as his leading troops moved down to the river an urgent order recalled them.

For General Monash had changed his plan. Even before the reports of engineers as to the bridges had arrived he had decided to concentrate his effort on the left flank, from the neighbourhood of Péronne northwards. He would squeeze the 2nd and 5th Divisions towards that flank, and each of them

³⁶ Res.-Lt. Blankenberg, 5/28th R.I.R. was found by Lt. Will Dyson, the official artist, in "Walfisch" strong-point mortally wounded, with an unfinished note in front of him about the short shooting. It is in the Australian War Memorial.

³⁷ Br.-Gen. Martin on the previous evening (Aug. 28) had ordered the 20th Bn. to push through the 18th at Ommiécourt bridgehead and rush the mount from the north-west; the 17th would go through the 19th at Halle and rush it from the south-west.

with one brigade in line would try to secure a crossing—the 2nd at Halle, the 5th at Péronne. But the 2nd Division had the leading task—to thrust along Mont St. Quentin spur. This spur looked down on the Tortille rivulet running from the north-east into the Somme bend. While the 2nd Division worked up the spur the 3rd would seize the parallel spur, between the Tortille and Bouchavesnes, guarding the left, and the 5th the slopes south and east of Péronne, guarding the right. If the 2nd Division found crossing at Halle impossible, it was to come round through the 3rd Division—or it could use any crossing forced by the 5th at Péronne. Similarly the 5th could come round through the 2nd or 3rd.³⁸ The concentration on the left would take place at once. The 5th Division would hand over its front to the 32nd British³⁹ which, holding a wide sector along the Somme bank, would not attempt a crossing if seriously opposed. The 15th Brigade (5th Divn.) would relieve the 7th Brigade (2nd Divn.). Engineers would build as many bridges for infantry as possible during the night, and at dawn on the 30th the 15th Brigade would try to cross near Péronne and the 5th at Halle and Ommiécourt. The second objective of the two divisions was the same as before—the heights south and north of Péronne; but either division might now reach its objective by passing through the other's territory wherever a crossing was effected.

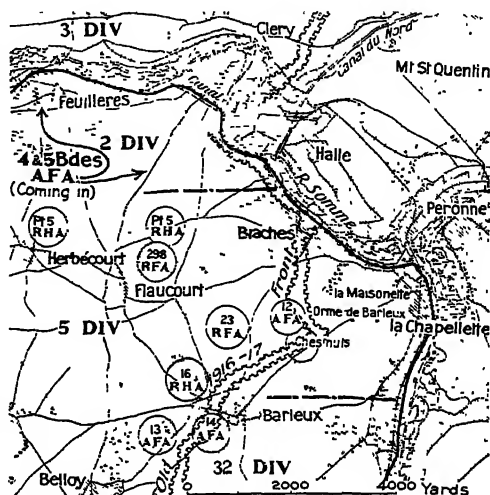


The pause that now occurred along the Somme was rendered less noticeable by the powerful field artillery which closely

³⁸ In his notes for the conference Monash allots to each division an immediate and an ultimate objective: 5th Div.—Péronne bridges, wooded spur east of Péronne; 2nd Div.—bridgehead at Halle, Mont St. Quentin; 3rd Div.—high ground north-east of Cléry, Bouchavesnes spur.

³⁹ The 14th Brit. Bde. would relieve the 8th Australian.

followed the divisions⁴⁰ and quickly took position—chiefly in the gully west of Barleux and Villers-Carbonnel. The observers had a splendid view. The Chestnut Troop, thrusting through Barleux,⁴¹ early nested itself at the head of a valley two miles from Péronne and shelled troops and waggons at the railway station there. Lieut.-Col. West⁴² of the 5th R.H.A. Brigade reported that his batteries “enjoyed the best shooting they had ever had against targets of every description” both north and east of the river. Engineers too were busy at all the bridges, scouting, in some parts, ahead of the infantry.⁴³ The engineer transport of both 5th and 6th Brigades had made ready with pontoons, cork



Field Arty. Bdes. of 2nd and 5th Divns. and new divnl. boundaries, Aug. 30. (Chestnuts—"A" Bty. R.H.A.)

⁴⁰ From north to south it was as follows:

3rd Div. (4 bdes.): Arty. of 3rd Aust. and 50th Brit. Divs.

2nd Div. (5 bdes.): Arty. of 1st Aust. Div.; 5th and 16th Army Bdes., R.H.A.; 298th Army Bde., R.F.A.

5th Div. (4 bdes.): Arty. of 5th Div.; 12th Army Bde., A.F.A.; 23rd Army Bde., R.F.A.

32nd Div. (4 bdes.): Arty. of 32nd Div.; 3rd and 6th Army Bdes., A.F.A.

The 2nd Div.'s artillery had just been relieved in the 32nd Div.'s sector and was about to join its own division, relieving the artillery of the 1st Div.

⁴¹ The enemy saw and shelled this movement, hitting some men and horses. "O" Bty., 5th R.H.A. Bde. also was seen crossing an exposed point to avoid trenches and wire. It was intensely shelled from north of the Somme, and its commander, Maj. G. E. B. Watson, (Bath, Somerset, Eng.), killed.

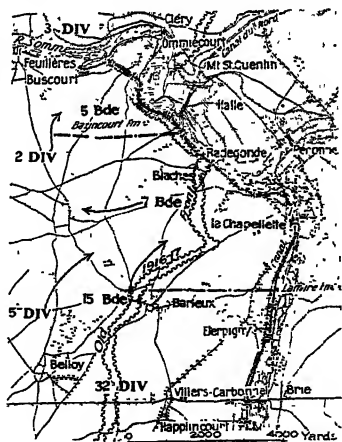
⁴² Brig. A. H. D. West, D.S.O.; R.H.A. Officer of Brit. Regular Army; of Berkshire, Eng.; b. Longford, Ire., 27 Dec. 1877.

⁴³ By many enterprising reconnaissances by engineers of the 5th, 7th, 8th and 15th Fld. Coys. and by the infantry who worked along the river during the 29th, it was discovered that in the south the main bridge carrying the Roman road at Brie had been well blown up but the light railway bridge beside it and the road bridges across the swamps beyond were passable by infantry. Lt. G. L. Bullen (Malvern, Vic.), 15th Fld. Coy. actually went across them to the edge of Brie. The bridge at Lamire Farm which the 26th Bn. had seized was only partly destroyed by the German battery that tried to break it. At the

floats, trestles and other bridging gear, and after dark the 7th Field Company bridged the canal at two points south of Péronne.⁴⁴

But, as constantly—and inevitably—happened in these operations, the higher commanders' decisions were made too late to be carried out in the time intended. The 15th Brigade, just recalled from the cancelled relief of the 8th, could not relieve the 7th before dawn on August 30th, and as movement down the slope to the river in daylight meant decimation the relief was postponed to the following night. Accordingly the 7th Brigade (2nd Divn.) now shouldered the 15th Brigade's task.⁴⁵ In the early hours of August 30th the 26th Battalion followed by the 28th moved down to the new bridges, and at dawn Capt. Cooper's company crossed the canal. But 200 yards beyond the bridge the duckboard track leading through the

lock at la Chapelle was an intact footbridge. The main railway bridge to Flamicourt (Péronne) was commanded by German machine-guns and several explosions occurred there about noon. The steel lattice work of the successive bridges on the main road entrance to Péronne could be climbed but was under machine-gun fire. All the above were south of Péronne. North-east of Péronne near the junction of the unfinished Canal du Nord were an intact footbridge and an unfinished traffic bridge, but the 500 yard causeway across the marsh beyond, by way of the Nord Canal bank to Halle, contained large gaps. The bridge to Bazincourt farm was demolished. The bridge at the Ommécourt canal lock was broken, but a light floating bridge intact, and at the farther end of the peninsula the bridges from Ommécourt to Cléry were then intact but unapproachable. North of Buscourt a broken footbridge crossed the marshes but not the canal (a pontoon bridge was placed here later by the 6th Fld. Coy.). Feuillères bridge had been blown up. The 5th Div.'s pioneers and engineers eventually took over the tasks of the 2nd Div. engineers and pioneers on the Péronne bridges. The engineers of the 32nd Div. made similar reconnaissances at St. Christ and other crossings; their patrols, too, were stopped by the marshes beyond.



⁴⁴ The waggon came down to the canal opposite Lamire Farm and unloaded pontoons. Lt. W. C. D. Veale (Bendigo, Vic., commanding 2/3rd Pion. Bn., A.I.F., 1940) was left by Maj. Webb to float these to the first bridge site, 400 yards north, while the waggons returned for cork floats (made by Fourth Army's workshops). Sgt. C. Sorrell (Rockdale, N.S.W.) brought and unloaded these by 3 a.m. They were then floated 1,000 yards to the second bridge site. This bridge was finished by 5 a.m. The floats were found useful but very heavy.

⁴⁵ If it succeeded in crossing it would seize Doint beyond Péronne, and hand it over as soon as the 15th came up.

rushes ended in a lagoon. An old punt there was used to search for possible crossings of the marsh, but none was found and the battalions were withdrawn before the morning fog lifted.⁴⁶ On the front of the 19th Battalion (5th Bde.) opposite Halle engineers of the 5th Company⁴⁷ brought bridging material to the Somme Canal near its junction with the Canal du Nord, and made a good crossing of the Somme Canal; but at 4.30 a.m. they had to tell the 19th, which was ready to pass over, that the long causeway beyond was impassable.

The best chance was at the Ommiécourt peninsula in the Somme bend. After noon on the 29th the 18th Battalion in the canal cutting had seen the 3rd Division's infantry advancing north of the Somme, and observed the light horse patrols in front being fired on from Cléry, though one horseman reached its outskirts. Till Cléry should be captured, no one could move on the Ommiécourt peninsula, but after dark—when the 3rd Division reported Cléry taken—a company advanced to Ommiécourt. The approaches were still swept by machine-gun fire, and though a patrol under Lieut. Clark⁴⁸ managed to reach the causeway and an engineer, Sapper Rand,⁴⁹ cut the wires leading to two mines under the bridges, no formed body of troops could get near the place. Messages to the 3rd Division urged it to complete the capture of Cléry, and the staffs anxiously saw their watch hands creep towards the zero hour for the Mont St. Quentin attack, 5 a.m. on the 30th. At 3 General Rosenthal laid before Brig.-Genl. Martin the alternatives of following the 7th Brigade, then still seeking to cross at Halle, or moving back two miles to Feuillères where the bridge had been repaired,⁵⁰ crossing there, and attacking later

South of
Somme,
August 30

⁴⁶ During the morning Lt. H. J. H. Tozer 28th Bn. and a fine scout, Sgt. Hugh Barber (S. Perth, W.A.), were sent to reconnoitre the main road bridge. While standing on it, looking over, Barber was shot dead.

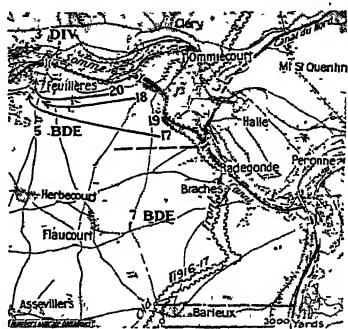
⁴⁷ Under Lt. H. P. Williamson.

⁴⁸ Lt. S. M. Clark, M.C.; 18th Bn. Leather trunk maker; of Glebe, N.S.W.; b. Telford, Vic., 14 July 1887.

⁴⁹ L.-Cpl. F. W. Rand (No. 2194; 5th Fld. Coy. Engrs.). Joinery machinist; of Hurlstone Park, N.S.W.; b. St Marylebone, London, 31 Oct. 1895. Killed in action, 31 Aug. 1918.

⁵⁰ By a section of the 5th Fld. Coy. under Lt. Croker, though he himself was wounded in the heavy shelling. Sgt. R. H. Wagner (Kew, Vic.) and Spr. W. H. Bridge (Gloucester, N.S.W.) were conspicuous in this fine achievement.

through the 3rd Division. At 4 o'clock being uncertain whether the 7th Brigade could cross, Rosenthal ordered the 5th to come back and cross at Feuil-lères leaving one battalion to watch the Somme front. It was still hoped that the 7th Brigade might succeed—actually at 5 a.m. a barrage was laid down⁵¹ to cover the operation. Meanwhile onlookers north and south of the Somme saw one of the Ommiécourt bridges blown up.



Only one charge exploded; Sapper Rand had cut the leads of the others. The German corps commander ordered that the demolition must be immediately completed. The divisional commander offered the iron cross (class I), a money reward, and leave to any one who did this—or a period of leave for a determined attempt. An ensign of the 21st Pion. Bn. made a plucky effort with unwilling men, but failed.

The 18th Battalion was brought out before full daylight; the 19th was left to guard the river front. By 7.30 the 17th, 18th and 20th were having breakfast beside their cookers back near Mereaucourt Wood.

The action that morning and on the crowded days that followed depended primarily on the progress of the 3rd Australian Division north of the Somme, to which this account must now revert.

This narrative left the 3rd Division when a light horse squadron under Maj. Buchanan⁵² trotted through the tired infantry on "Flint Ridge"⁵³ about an hour before noon on August 29th to get touch with the enemy who had vanished ahead. The 38th Battalion (10th Bde.) had been fighting or moving continuously, night and day, since August 26th. Its staff having worked for 71½ hours without sleep had at last settled at Curlu, the intelligence officer and adjutant lying down to sleep while the doctor and the scout officer (who was killed a few

**North of
Somme,
August 29**

⁵¹ By the 29th R.F.A. and 5th R.H.A. Bdes. N.E. of Flaucourt.

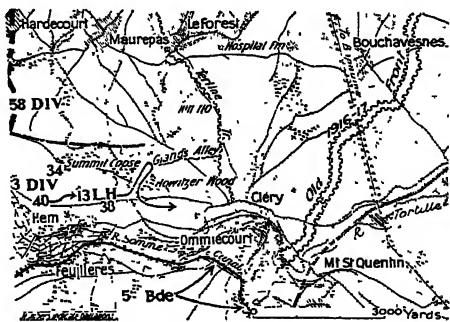
⁵² Maj. D. D. Buchanan; 13th L. H. Regt. Grazier; of Tooraweenah, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 23 Jan. 1875.

⁵³ Near Monacu "Farm", of which no trace remained.

hours later)⁵⁴ proposed "a swim and a good feed" first. At this moment there had arrived the brigadier, General McNicoll, whom they assumed to be also coming for a long deferred "nap." "Get your battalion ready to move in twenty minutes as advanced guard of the brigade," he said. "Cléry is burning and if possible your headquarters are to be there to-night."

What had happened was that headquarters of 3rd Division at 6.30 had been startled to receive a map marked by an airman showing that the 2nd Division south of the river was two and a half miles ahead, nearing the bend of the Somme. General Gellibrand asked his brigadiers what they were doing. The 10th Brigade's engineers and pioneers were just completing repair of Vaux and Curlu bridges so that the 40th might cross to support the 38th. The 38th was "ready to move at any moment."⁵⁵ The 9th Brigade also had reached the "Flint Ridge," but III Corps was a mile behind its left and not moving. Monash and Gellibrand, however, directed that both the 3rd Division's brigades must press on as soon as possible to cover the flank of the 2nd Division, and must themselves protect their left flanks.

Late in the morning, when the 40th Battalion arrived behind the right, the 38th moved at once. By 11 it was near the great abandoned German dumps east of Hem in the gully up which runs the Ham-Albert railway. Ahead was a long many-folded spur of open moorland running down from Hill 110 and Hospital Farm. Here the light horse passed through, and climbing the next ridge tried to deploy north of Howitzer "Wood."⁵⁶ They were at once heavily shelled, so they trotted back, wheeled at a gallop round the south of the wood, and went over the ridge and



⁵⁴ Lt. G. A. Dutton, 38th Bn. Carpenter; of Ascot Vale, Vic.; b. Corop West, Vic., 18 Oct. 1889. Killed in action, 29 Aug. 1918.

⁵⁵ The advance would, of course, be made without artillery barrage, but batteries of field-guns or howitzers were attached to the attacking battalions.

⁵⁶ The woods were mere stubble of broken trunks.



38. PÉRONNE, SEEN FROM ACROSS THE SOMME

Part of the old ramparts can be seen on the left. A shell is bursting over the ruined church in the centre.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo No. E3212
Taken on 2nd September, 1918.*



39. MONT ST. QUENTIN, FROM THE SOUTH

The view is from north of the moat of Péronne. On the left is the cemetery by Anvil Wood. Across the photograph runs the Ham-Albert railway, captured by the 53rd Battalion on September 1st and from which it afterwards attacked. The attacks on Mont St. Quentin were made from beyond the left of the picture.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E3210.
Taken on 2nd September, 1918.*

To face p. 793

out of sight down the slope towards the ruin heaps of Cléry, which reached across the lower end of the next valley and under the foot of the next spur, in the Somme bend. Germans ran away up the spurs to the left but heavy machine-gun fire opened from Cléry and a thick belt of rusted entanglement barred their way down to the village. They returned, reported touch with the enemy, and duly handed over the task to the 38th. The German artillery, evidently now in position, kept up heavy shelling. Lieut. Dutton, who was killed in this, and some scouts were sent to reconnoitre Cléry while the battalion, in old trenches along the south-western extension of Hill 110, snatched what rest it could, or looked out at Cléry, under the next ridge, and Mont St. Quentin two miles beyond it. High up the bare plateau to the 38th's left front ran Terline Trench near which it was to join the 9th Brigade that evening.

The 9th Brigade was in a difficult position—it had to keep touch with III Corps, but also to thrust far forward. The III Corps divisions were to operate this day merely with advanced guards, and the 58th Division, as General Ramsay⁵⁷ informed the 3rd Division's *liaison* officer,⁵⁸ was “fairly knocked up.” Its relief by a newly arrived division, the 74th (originally formed in Egypt from yeomanry, and used as infantry in Palestine), was already mooted. Meanwhile Ramsay expected to reorganise his tired troops this day and “push on in the morning.” His advanced guard (175th Brigade) was without cavalry, and though infantry patrols were sent forward its line at noon was still near Hardecourt, more than two miles west of Hill 110, which the 9th Brigade was to reach. Even from Summit Copse, where the 34th Battalion (forming the 9th Brigade's front this day) awaited reports from the light horse scouting towards Hill 110, a long flank had to be thrown back to keep touch with the British. At 1.30 the light horse⁵⁹ reported that Germans held the hill. Brig.-Genl. Goddard at once ordered the 34th to advance upon it. The advanced guard of the 58th Division was aiming at an objective only about half as distant, but the 34th covered its left with a strong-post

⁵⁷ Maj.-Gen. F. W. Ramsay, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. Commanded 58th Div. 1918-19, 30th Div. 1919; b. 10 Dec. 1875.

⁵⁸ Capt. S. I. Suter, M.C.; 40th Bn. Clerk; of Launceston, Tas.; b. Launceston, 26 Jan. 1896.

⁵⁹ They were allowed this day to work 1,000 yards north of their sector.

looking towards Maurepas and at 4 o'clock moved in artillery formation of platoons.

An increasing difficulty for the Australians in this continuous fighting, coming after four months of "peaceful" penetration, was the ever diminishing strength of their battalions. Companies of the 34th had dwindled to three platoons, and the platoons to about fifteen men; these were strong in Lewis guns but the gun-teams comprised only two or three men, who carried half a dozen magazines instead of fifteen or twenty. One company had now to guard the left and one march in reserve leaving only two, eighty rifles in all, for the main attack. The Germans must have seen the tiny group of columns descending the opposite hill by Hem "Wood," but only long range shells from medium artillery sprinkled the area until the columns turned north-westward up the 110 ridge. On its crest they were faced by 100-200 Germans behind a strong belt of old French wire. A platoon of the right company working through an old sap, Gland's Alley, to Terline Trench, and other platoons worming along other saps, appeared unexpectedly on the enemy's southern flank. Two posts were routed out, and the left company, working from the northern end of Terline trench⁶⁰ into shell-holes, bombed the Germans near the summit, taking 50 prisoners. The 34th dug in; a company of the 33rd, and two of the 40th (lent by the 10th Brigade) in Gland's Alley, guarded the long open flank.⁶¹

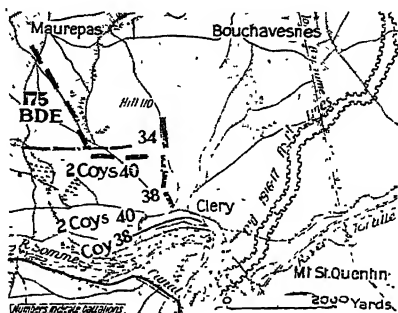
Meanwhile some ten German machine-guns, mostly on the hill above Cléry, were pinning the 38th Battalion in the old trenches on the slope west of the village. The company commanders had been trying to probe forward through the old saps but their troops had now been going for 84 hours without rest: they were at the end of their powers and, despite the dense shelling of the riverside, they dropped and slept whenever they stopped. The 3rd Division's artillery was moving up to the east of Curlu and from there the 7th A.F.A. Brigade heavily shelled Cléry and the trenches north of it from 6.30 p.m. till 7. The companies were ordered to advance immediately afterwards. The order only reached battalion

⁶⁰ This trench, though shown on the army maps as reaching Hill 100, ended at a big crater 1,000 yards short of it.

⁶¹ The 40th reported a German machine-gun post at Junction Wood 1,000 yards in rear of the flank.

headquarters at 6.30, too late to be carried out;⁶² but the three northern companies pushed on soon after 7, and by 9 were in the old saps on the slope above Cléry, their left touching the right of the 9th Brigade.

On the right where Lieut. Sandiford's⁶³ company, only forty strong, had stopped in old trenches facing Cléry, Lieut.-Col. Lord of the 40th put his two remaining companies through them, and moved to the steep bank at the western entrance of the village. Lieut. Mahoney⁶⁴



(40th) with a patrol of both battalions found the enemy apparently leaving Cléry, and after dark Sandiford's company moved through the ruins in extended order without a shot being fired and settled at the eastern end, close to Ommiécourt bridge. Then, at the end of 89 hours' labour, it reported Cléry taken.

Both the 10th and 9th Bdes. had come up against the outposts of the 21st Divn. whose new forward zone north of the Somme ran from Cléry to Hill 110. Its forward posts⁶⁵ were driven back.

The two tired brigades had advanced three miles and driven in the enemy's outposts, but Monash's plan necessitated at once another call on them. The Germans had that morning abandoned Bapaume to the New Zealanders and Monash believed that German resistance between there and Péronne was crumbling.⁶⁶ He had now Rawlinson's approval for his scheme of rushing Mont St. Quentin, and that afternoon, as has already been mentioned,

**3rd Division,
August 29-30**

⁶² At 5.50 p.m. the commander of the 40th immediately behind the 38th having received the order asked Capt. C. H. Peters (38th) if his battalion was moving; if not, he said, he would go through. Peters had not received it but had written to his battalion commander proposing to thrust along the old trenches when the other companies were ready.

⁶³ Lt. N. W. W. Sandiford, M.C.; 38th Bn. Solicitor; of Wycheproof, Vic.; b. Warragul, Vic., 6 May 1886. Died 13 July 1926.

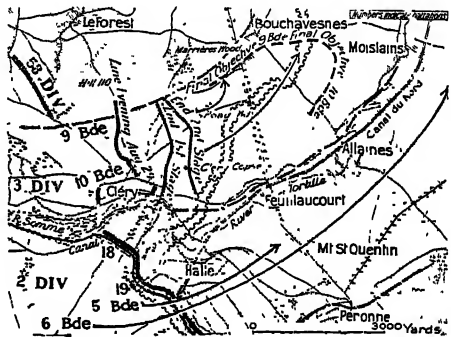
⁶⁴ Lt. T. Mahoney; 40th Bn. Miner; of Hobart; b. Launceston, 23 Jan. 1887. Killed in action, 30 Aug. 1918.

⁶⁵ The 12th Coy., 80th I.R., at Hill 110 and its 6th Coy. west of Cléry.

⁶⁶ Prisoners just taken by III Corps said they had fled to Péronne and been rounded up and sent to the front again.

he explained it to his divisional commanders. If the 5th Brigade (2nd Divn.) could seize the mount next morning the 6th Brigade was to follow and thrust through it along the ridge to Nurlu, in rear of the Germans facing III Corps. The 3rd Division, in guarding the 2nd Division's left by thrusting up the Bouchavesnes ridge, would also head across the III Corps front. Rawlinson, though he had laughed at Monash's "cheek" in proposing to take Mont St. Quentin with one weak brigade, agreed to let him try, and authorised the Corps boundaries to be changed accordingly.

Monash issued the orders forthwith; and Gellibrand, returning shortly before 9 p.m. from the conference, instructed Col. Jess to telephone to Brig.-Genl. McNicoll (10th Bde.), whose headquarters were now just east of Curlu, to begin at once the movement of the right by securing an old trench-line (St. Gond Trench) on the spur above Cléry; the brigade would then go on and seize the rest of the spur in co-operation with the 9th Brigade at 4 o'clock next morning.



About the same time the 2nd Division was to cross the river and attack towards Mont St. Quentin. The 10th would afterwards swing north towards Bouchavesnes, the 9th forming a flank for it by facing north along the valley between Road Wood and Marrières Wood.

McNicoll, whose battalions like most others of the A.I.F. had now barely 300 rifles in the line, and were—even more than others—almost dazed for lack of sleep, was shocked by these orders. "It will fail" he said. "The men are too knocked out, and the officers also." But on Jess's pointing to the even more crucial task of the 2nd Division McNicoll undertook his part. Indeed he offered to pass the order to the 9th Brigade, whose headquarters were near by; and he was entrusted with co-ordinating the action of the two brigades. The attack would

be made in two stages with the advance on Bouchavesnes as a third. McNicoll had already sent up the 37th Battalion to half a mile west of Cléry, with the 39th, very weak, behind it; he now ordered the 37th to make the attack. The 9th Brigade would employ the 34th Battalion, which had made the previous day's advance. McNicoll arranged for the first stage⁶⁷ to begin at 2.30 a.m. and the second at 4 a.m. There would be no planned barrage; batteries were attached to the battalions to support them as occasion arose.

So, through the belief of Monash and other leaders that only rear guards would be met, or at least troops about to withdraw to the Hindenburg Line, two tired battalions, 400 rifles in all, were ordered to attack by night two objectives a mile away over uneven country seamed by old trenches and completely unreconnoitred, at least by the 37th.

It was 9 p.m. when McNicoll received the orders. The 9th Brigade and all battalion commanders had to be informed, and these to inform their company commanders, and these their subalterns and troops. But, in the extraordinarily difficult fighting that followed, all concerned were helped by one circumstance—that McNicoll placed his command post at the steep bank on the western edge of Cléry, a position unmistakable for messengers and very close to the attacking troops. A hot meal had been sent up for them but there was no time for either brigade to take it—the companies had to start as soon as the order reached them, at 1.30, and trust to their emergency rations. Capt. Towl's company of the 37th led off to the right followed by two others, and Capt. Clarebrough's⁶⁸ headed up the open valley and slope to the left.

The night was pitch dark and Towl, being wrongly led by the only guide available, had to turn back and after much searching secure, at the west of Cléry, another guide who as-

⁶⁷ Nominally this was the second stage since the order from Monash and Gellibrand provided for an advance in four stages. But the first stage, to Terline Trench and the east end of Cléry, had already been accomplished. The second (now the first) was to a line from Ommiécourt causeway, up St. Gond Trench, and thence north-west across the valley to the 58th Div.'s boundary; the third to Van and Berlingots Trenches up to a point south of Road Wood and thence north-west. In the final advance, to Bouchavesnes, the 40th Bn. would advance on the left of the 37th, the 34th (9th Bde.) farther left merely forming a flank.

⁶⁸ Brig. J. A. Clarebrough; 37th Bn. Dental student; of Middle Park, Vic.; b. Moreland, Vic., 25 Feb. 1894.

sured him that the village was free of the enemy. Towl (in civil life a geologist, of Ballarat) was to start through Sandiford's company (38th), but as by 4 o'clock he had not found it he led out of the north-eastern corner of the ruins, and, despite the fact that a low whistle behind him pointed to Germans being there, headed up the spur north-westwards to gain touch with the next company, Lieut. Cox's.⁶⁹ Within ten minutes he came on it. In the dark the two leaders ranged out their men, about 70 in all, in a line of sections in single file. They set direction, due east, by compass and advanced towards a low dip in the summit. On the left appeared a stubble which, after consulting their maps, they rightly decided to be Cléry Copse. It was marked as lying between two old trenches, Berlingots and Van, of which the latter was the second objective. Cox now, as arranged, led towards the Copse while Towl headed east for the first trench (Berlingots). After he had gone 100 yards one of his men challenged "Halt!" A voice twenty yards ahead said "Pardon, M'sieu!" Towl's company, thirty strong, charged and found the trench lined with dozens of Germans with hands up and equipment off. They had clearly been surprised and were ordered to cluster at a survey pole near by on the ridge; one man was left to collect them while the rest hurried to Van Trench. This too was full of Germans, who surrendered. Between the trenches and in them were too many prisoners to handle. The guard at the post was therefore sent off with his party. At this stage on the right fifty Germans who had surrendered to a patrol of three men under Sergt. Davis⁷⁰ were called on by one of their officers to make a fight of it. Davis shot the officer and Davis's men opened on the others. These quickly disappeared into the trench and shell-holes, and soon after, realising how few their opponents were, attacked Towl's right. Private Krauklys,⁷¹ a Finn, was sent with a Lewis gun and two riflemen to keep them off. Germans were now firing from front and both flanks. Krauklys' gun jammed, but he ran out and secured a German machine-gun with ammunition.

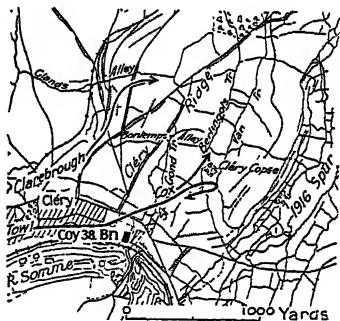
⁶⁹ Lt. E. J. Cox; 37th Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Melbourne; b. Maidstone, Kent, Eng., 14 Mar. 1880.

⁷⁰ L.-Sgt. A. E. Davis, M.M. (No. 1932; 37th Bn.). Farmer; of Macarthur, Vic.; b. Penshurst, Vic., 22 Apr. 1898.

⁷¹ Pte. J. R. Krauklys (No. 6572; 37th Bn.). Labourer; of Sydney; b. Riga, Russia, 1892. Killed in action, 30 Aug. 1918.

Lieut. Ashmead on the left had another, the Lewis gun was got going, and a German counter-attack from the front was beaten off. The dawn mist was now condensing and Ashmead, though he went 300 yards to the left, could find nothing of Cox. On the right no sign of the 2nd Division's men appeared. Attacked again in flank, Ashmead being mortally wounded and the company (now some 20 strong) hampered by 15 prisoners, Towl withdrew to Berlingots Trench to find that the Germans had reached it through a flanking communication trench. Accordingly, bringing his wounded and prisoners, he withdrew to a bank a little in rear, and later to another, where he held on.

Cox, after leaving Towl, had sent out two fighting patrols, and himself presently joined the left one. It was fired on and was chasing a machine-gun crew far ahead when the mist suddenly lifted and it found itself in a nest of machine-gun posts. These fired on it from all sides; Lieut. Willis⁷² was killed and Cox and the four others wounded. Between 9 and 10 o'clock they were bombed and captured.



The Germans met in this attack were those holding the main line of the 80th I.R. It had two battalions in line, III and II. Towl and Cox had penetrated the line of the III Bn. where it had been reinforced by a platoon of the Augusta Regt. of Guards, which Towl captured. A Company of the Augusta was then brought up, captured Cox, and drove Towl back across the front of the II Bn. The regiment's history says that its 7th Coy. reduced a "most troublesome enemy machine-gun" to silence.

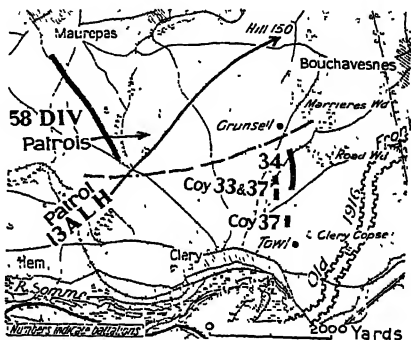
The other companies of the 37th were held up on the western edge of the hill. Farther north the 34th (9th Bde.), reinforced by a company of the 33rd, had advanced through the dark very widely extended without meeting a shot till near Road Wood, when from the wood there rose several flares. The battalion was seen and intense machine-gun fire opened on it. Casualties

⁷² Lt. H. J. Willis; 37th Bn. School teacher; of Port Welshpool and Nagambie, Vic.; b. Eaglehawk, Vic., 20 Jan. 1894. Killed in action, 30 Aug. 1918.

were heavy⁷³ and the battalion dropped into shell-holes.⁷⁴ The German staff seemed unsure of the position. Red nosed aeroplanes came over constantly without firing.

**9th Brigade,
August 30**

German artillery and trench-mortars bombarded their own trench from which flares rose continuously in protest. On the Australian side, although the observing officer with his telephone was lying out among the infantry, the guns supporting the 34th found it most difficult to hit the German trench and often narrowly missed their own. The left flank of the 34th was a mile and a half in the air. While Germans on the Le Forest-Cléry road held up the 58th Division's cavalry patrols, the Australian light horse, sent at dawn across the British front, were at 8 a.m. observing from Hill 150, two miles



ahead of the 58th Division's left. British patrols came up several hours later and the main guard early in the afternoon, and were stopped on the ridge south of Hill 150 by strong fire from Marrières Wood. Meanwhile the 34th had to protect its flank by sending the party north, in front of Marrières Wood, from which came deadly machine-gun fire. The officer in charge, Lieut. Grunsell,⁷⁵ was killed but his post commanded the edge of the wood. The 9th Brigade was thus soon stopped on its first objective.

Its attack had come against the Augusta Regt. of Guards (2nd Guard Divn.) which had relieved the right of the 21st Divn. (87th I.R.) during the night; its I Bn. held the new forward zone on the right and the III Bn. on the left. The I Bn. stopped the 34th Bn.'s attack but the III was outflanked on the south—by Towl and Cox. There, as already related, a reserve company counter-attacked and filled a gap.

⁷³ Capt. A. W. Macdonald (Neutral Bay, N.S.W.) was killed and Capt. Beaver badly wounded. Ultimately only three officers were left there—Capt. Cains and Lts. W. H. Richardson (Woollahra, N.S.W.) and F. C. Grimsley (Drummoyne, N.S.W.).

⁷⁴ Close ahead was a belt of old wire.

⁷⁵ Lt. A. J. Grunsell, M.M.; 34th Bn. Hospital attendant; of Goulburn, N.S.W.; b. Goulburn, 8 Sep. 1892. Killed in action, 31 Aug. 1918.

The left of the 37th Battalion was in touch with the 34th; but a mile to the south-east Capt. Towl's small party, still isolated by intense fire at its bank high above Cléry, was now also fired on from its rear, evidently by a German machine-gun near Cléry. Towl could not get a runner through—all were shot including the Finn, Krauklys, who offered to make the run. But at 11 o'clock the welcome crack of a Lewis gun began to be heard in that direction.

Much had happened since Towl's astonishing advance. First, the Digger escorting Towl's earliest prisoners had brought back about 6 a.m. news of his initial success—that the 37th was in its second objective at Van Trench though the companies were not connected. The 3rd Division's staff had by then heard—by telephone from General Rosenthal—that the 2nd Division could not cross the Somme at Cléry owing to the presence of Germans immediately east of that village. Accordingly between 8 and 9 a.m., Brig.-Genl. McNicoll, still at his command post west of Cléry, ordered the 40th Battalion (Tas.) to guard the 37th's right and make sure of the Somme crossing by pushing 500 yards beyond the village and river bend. At 10.30 came a report that Germans were in Cléry Copse and attacking the 37th. The 3rd Division's artillery at once shelled them with great vigour.

At 11 o'clock Capt. McIntyre's⁷⁶ company of the 40th with a British artillery observer, Lieut. Laidlaw,⁷⁷ entered the ruins of Cléry. The company had only two platoons—Lieut. Walters'⁷⁸ platoon (with which went McIntyre) moved south of the main road, Lieut. Rattray's⁷⁹ north of it. Both were soon met by fierce fire from the eastern outskirts by which Walters was wounded. But two scouts⁸⁰ crept on and located the German post in a trench and fortified ruin on the cross-road to Ommiécourt bridge. Laidlaw now directed his guns upon this end of the place. The German artillery replied but Rattray and

⁷⁶ Capt. G. L. McIntyre, M.C.; 40th Bn. Mining engineer; of Hobart; b. Hobart, 15 July 1876.

⁷⁷ Lt. W. S. Laidlaw; B/250th Bty., R.F.A. Killed in action, 30 Aug. 1918.

⁷⁸ Lt. R. C. Walters; 40th Bn. School teacher; of Launceston, Tas.; b. Beaconsfield, Tas., 25 Dec. 1896.

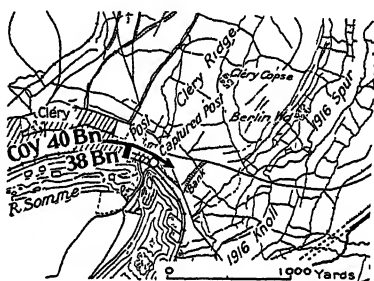
⁷⁹ Lt. J. S. Rattray, M.C.; 40th Bn. Postal assistant; of Burnie, Tas.; b. Launceston, Tas., 25 Nov. 1895.

⁸⁰ L.-Cpl. E. V. Reardon (Triabunna, Tas.; died 14 June 1935) and Pte. D. R. Oates (Hobart).

his men worked through this shelling to within 100 yards of the post, pushed out two Lewis guns to make the Germans keep their heads down, and then rushed it; 59 prisoners (more than McIntyre's company) and 3 machine-guns were taken.

This was the 6th Coy., 80th I.R. Only 14 men escaped. The commandant of Cléry, Lt. Stachler, appeared bitterly depressed until told that he had fought very well.

Ahead, beyond the river bend and a small triangular flat, was a thirty-foot rise forming the end of a narrow spur that ran down two miles from the main Bouchavesnes-Cléry ridge to the Somme at Halle. Across its summit French and Germans had faced each other through the winter of 1916-17; the spur, seamed with a maze of old saps which farther north curved round Bouchavesnes, will here be called the "1916 Spur," and its lower end, extending from east of Cléry to the junction of Tortille and Somme, the "1916 Knoll." Behind it lay the Tortille valley and the gentle slope to Mont St. Quentin. In the old trenches on the Knoll were many Germans, thirty of whom filing along a sunken road now tried to attack. Bullets were poured into them from the Lewis guns—one fired from the shoulder by a big Tasmanian⁸¹—and from captured machine-guns, and they ran.⁸²



The sound of this fighting reached Towl high on the ridge above. At 1.30 the fire upon him eased and, seeing Australians lower on Cléry Spur advancing from cover to cover, he ran down to them. They were the first of the 2nd Division flowing through the trenches north of Cléry towards the Somme bend to attack Mont St. Quentin.⁸³

At this time in Cléry McIntyre's company was reinforced by Lieut. Game's company and at once, at 3 p.m., Lieut.

⁸¹ L.-Cpl. J. Cox, M.M. (No. 2067A; 40th Bn.). Farm labourer; of Launceston, Tas.; b. Bracknell, Tas., 1895.

⁸² About this time the British F.O.O., Lt. Laidlaw, was killed.

⁸³ At dusk Towl brought out his company, his telephone, two Lewis guns, and all the wounded and the 15 prisoners. Precisely half his men had been hit.

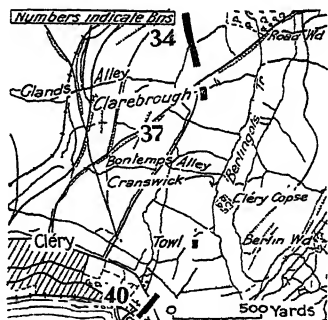
McMillan with a corporal, S. E. Dale,⁸⁴ crept along a road into the old trench-system ahead. Here they stalked one German post after another being presently helped by a scout who had been watching the sport. Some of the Germans, after others had been shot, fled from their guns but the party captured eight, and three machine-guns. The ground having thus been cleared the reinforcing company advanced 300 yards beyond the river bend, and with its own and the captured guns established a firm position.

Hearing that the Germans had counter-attacked about Cléry Copse, and having no more news of the two southern companies

**Cranswick's
attempt**

of the 37th there since their success at dawn, McNicoll decided to support them with Lieut. Cranswick's company of the 40th; with the reserve company of the 37th it was ordered to seize the copse at 2 p.m. Many Germans were then in that area and the fact that all parties of Australians crossing the valley behind Cléry were heavily shelled—as were the riverside road and all rear slopes—indicated that they had observers looking down that valley. Clarebrough's company of the 37th and the reserve company had been stopped in an effort to work through old saps on to the crest of Cléry ridge. The 37th had marched and fought for several days and nights, and at the last moment its reserve company was reported to be in no condition for so difficult a task. McNicoll decided that Cranswick's company must make the attempt alone.

This message came too late to reach Cranswick. The Germans were first to be bombarded by Stokes mortars and artillery, but little was known as to their position. After Lieuts. Mahoney and Lawrence⁸⁵ had scouted up an old sap, Bontemps Alley, into the German position, the company worked along it to Berlingots Trench where Cox



⁸⁴ L.-Cpl. S. E. Dale, M.M. (No. 2079; 40th Bn.). Bushman; of Dover, Port Esperance, Tas.; b. Dover, 1 Oct. 1889.

⁸⁵ Lt. O. E. Lawrence; 40th Bn. Farmer; of Longford, Tas.; b. Cressy, Tas., 12 June 1881.

had penetrated earlier. After driving off some enemy posts in stiff fighting, Mahoney was killed and Cranswick wounded,⁸⁶ and Lawrence with difficulty withdrew the survivors, the Germans counter-attacking as he did so.⁸⁷

This counter-attack was made by a company of the III Bn. Augusta Regt., 2nd Guard Divn. A striking contrast was noted between the statements of the tired troops hitherto captured and those of the prisoners from this regiment who were among the first sent in by Towl. The tired 80th Fusilier Regt., expecting relief by the Guards, said, like most earlier prisoners, that the withdrawal was expected to continue to the Hindenburg Line; but the fresh troops said they knew of no such intention: their present position was a good line and their orders were to hold it at all costs. But exhausted prisoners continued to predict further withdrawal, and at 1.30 Brig.-Gen. McNicoll reported that a yellow flare fired from Berlin Wood in the German support line was possibly a signal for further retirement.

The course of the battle encouraged doubt on this point. III Corps reported that it had seized Rancourt on the Bapaume-Péronne road and would try to enter St. Pierre Vaast Wood; but at dusk the front was still far west of these places, roughly in line with the Australian left where the III Corps had come up but could not get its patrols into Marrières Wood. Apparently this and Road Wood could be taken only with strong assistance from artillery.⁸⁸ An attack behind a regular barrage was accordingly arranged for dawn next morning. At the same time the 5th Australian Brigade now pushing round Cléry would attack Mont St. Quentin.

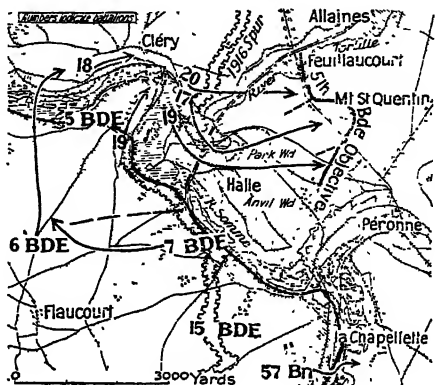
The times and other details in the orders for attack on Mont St. Quentin were constantly changed by telephone, as events compelled, but most of the main provisions remained the same. At this stage the arrangements were that the 5th Brigade after assembling beyond Cléry should drive for the Mount at dawn. The Bapaume-Péronne road, an old Roman highway, crossed it just west of its summit. Two battalions would attack, the right, 17th, to seize the village and small woods on the summit

⁸⁶ He died of this wound in 1920.

⁸⁷ Sgt. W. N. Grey (Smithton, Tas.) and L.-Cpl. K. C. Masterman (Hobart) were then bringing in Mahoney's body, and L.-Cpl. F. J. Heron (Launceston) searching for a wounded man. In the ensuing *mêlée* Masterman and Heron were surrounded and captured.

⁸⁸ The 3rd A.F.A. and 14th R.F.A. Army Bdes. had relieved the 50th Div.'s artillery.

beyond this road, the left, 20th, to seize the line of the road down the northern slope to Feuillaucourt bridge at the bottom. The 6th Brigade, then near Herbécourt, would also cross the Somme, follow the 5th through Cléry, pass through it on Mont St. Quentin, and thrust deeper along the crest. The 7th Brigade, still holding the front opposite Péronne, would have been relieved before dawn by Elliott's brigade (15th) of the 5th Division; and Elliott would continue the attempt to cross frontally and thrust to the hills beyond Doingt to guard the 5th Brigade's right. As it was doubtful whether this could be



done, at least till the capture of the Mount changed the conditions, the 5th Brigade would at first have to guard its own right. This was to be done by its support battalion⁸⁹ occupying two parallel trenches, Über Alles and Gott Mit Uns, running south-west down the southern slopes of the Mount, overlooking Péronne. South of Péronne Elliott's right battalion (57th) would continue the effort to cross, but was not to become involved in heavy fighting, the main object here apparently being to deceive the enemy as to the direction of the main attack.

For the difficulty of crossing the marshes had caused Monash's plan to develop into one for a flanking attack through Cléry which, he records,⁹⁰ had been "vaguely forming" in his mind ever since he had been allowed to extend his left across the Somme. One action in particular had made this possible—the 3rd Division's exhausting thrust along the north of the river. The 3rd must still push on up the Bouchavesnes Ridge at least to its junction with the "1916 Spur" from which (along a second spur) the Péronne-Bapaume road ran steeply down into Feuillaucourt.

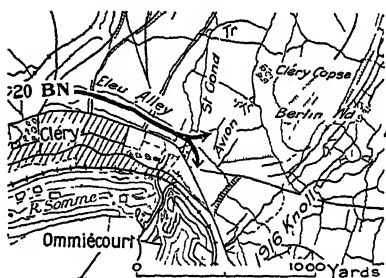
⁸⁹ At first the 18th, later the 19th, had this duty.

⁹⁰ *Australian Victories*, p. 176.

Accordingly yet another call was made on the 10th and 9th Brigades. On August 27th Monash had explained to his divisional generals that in following the Germans each attacking brigade was "to be kept in line till it had reached the limit of its endurance." The 10th and 9th were obviously near that limit, and the order caused resentment though every one obeyed it.

The men of the 5th Brigade also, then passing around Cléry for the great effort against Mont St. Quentin at dawn, were exceedingly tired. During the night of the 28th they had prepared to attack. They had advanced and fought throughout the 29th; had assembled for another attack during the night of the 29th; had marched back at dawn on the 30th to near Frise where all expected a sleep but instead, after washing feet, shave, and hot breakfast, had moved at 10.30 by the Somme tow path and bridges to Cléry. At the bank there Col. Forbes (20th) was told by McNicoll that he believed the 37th to be at Berlingots Trench and that the 40th was dealing with any Germans at the far end of Cléry. To avoid fire and keep hidden, the 20th—only 300 strong including 50 on headquarters—climbed up an old sap, Eleu Alley, across the moorland above.⁹¹ They presently

found that this trench had been used for horse standings and had to break their way through a succession of light partitions. Their assembling ground was to be on 1916 Knoll, on which the 40th Battalion was intended to get a footing. As the leading company of the



20th, Capt. Barlow's, filed along the shallow sap into sight of this knoll and of Mont St. Quentin behind it, the foremost platoon under Lieut. Anthon was fired on by machine-guns from right and left front and by one close ahead in Eleu Alley. This was quickly outflanked⁹² and surrendered. Two

⁹¹ A party of the 3rd Div. in this trench said they were the supports—that the front line was ahead in Berlingots Trench or Bontemps Alley.

⁹² By taking the risk of hopping from shell-hole to shell-hole.

machine-gun crews were routed from some part of Cléry. Two more, firing from Avion Trench on the next fold of Cléry Spur, were killed or captured after a sharp bomb fight by Lieut. Elliott's⁹³ platoon. The platoon was counter-attacked, and, ten of its men being killed, was driven out. When the 40th cleared the post east of the village, Barlow's company (20th) tried to push down Barge Alley or across the Péronne road and the triangular flat to the 1916 Knoll. But road and alley were straight under the muzzles of the German front line on the knoll. Bullets smacked into an awkward dip of the trench across which men had to jump singly, and after many trials the senior company commander, Maj. McDonald, advised that the 20th be kept where it then was, in St. Gond Trench, until dusk when the knoll should be easily taken. During the pause Lieut. Balmahno and Sergt. Welch⁹⁴ crept across the road, down the Albert-Ham railway cutting beside the Somme and each bombed and captured a machine-gun post. The 20th had captured in all 60 prisoners and 7 machine-guns and had cleared its way for attacking the knoll.

German records show that the 20th advancing through Eleu Alley had thrust through the 80th I.R. Lt. Elliott had apparently driven back two companies of its northern battalion, but the 9th and 10th Coys. retook the post in Avion Trench, capturing two Australians. The 20th however still remained in the sector of the southern battalion (most of whose posts had probably fled). The 87th I.R., then in reserve, was ordered to rush its troops on to the 1916 Spur facing the gap. Here, next to them on the south, in trenches along the western face of the knoll was the main line garrison of the southern regiment of the 21st Divn., the 81st I.R. It was these who fired straight into the 20th trying to cross the road. The posts cleared from the flats in the bend were those of the 81st's forward zone.

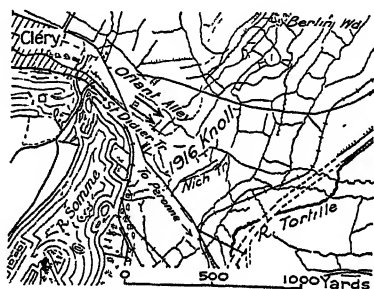
Again the pause in the infantry's attack was less noticeable because of the aggression of the supporting guns. The 5th Infantry Brigade had been given the 4th Brigade A.F.A., and, Feuillères bridge having been repaired sufficiently for guns to cross, about 3 p.m. the 11th and 12th Batteries did so and took position on the riverside west of Cléry, being attached to the 17th and 20th Battalions. South of the river the 10th and 104th Batteries of the same brigade were pushed into a dip on the

⁹³ Lt. R. S. Elliott, M.C., 20th Bn. Mason; of Cobar, N.S.W.; b. Nyngan, N.S.W., 24 Apr. 1897.

⁹⁴ Sgt. A. L. Welch, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 1399; 20th Bn.). Monumental mason; of Manly, N.S.W.; b. Dundee, Scotland, 27 July 1886. Died 22 Nov. 1938.

high ground in the Somme angle. The observers of all four had a splendid view; if the German shell-fire along the river-side, especially at Cléry, was this day memorable, still more so, say the infantry's records, was the sight of the Germans harried from spur to spur and trench to trench by British shells.⁹⁵

At dusk the companies of the 20th, one after another, filed out along the Cléry-Péronne road and, hugging its sheltering eastern side, reached a steep bank along the foot of the knoll. Barlow's company rushed and killed a few Germans in a hollow beside this bank and then Anthon's and Elliott's platoons bombed up the old St. Didier and Oflant Alleys towards the summit. Against the skyline above Germans could be seen running in droves, but the two platoons caught them in a cross fire with their Lewis guns and, reaching the cross trench from which most of the fire had come, captured 60 and four machine-guns. The two young leaders passed back word for reinforcements and the companies came up hill and occupied the trench.



Attack is shown by arrows.

Here was the main line of resistance of the 81st I.R. guarding Cléry bend.

The 20th was now precisely on the assembly ground which was to have been secured by the 40th Battalion. Patrols found most of the enemy gone from the hill, and Maj. McDonald decided to hold this line for the night and seize the rest of the knoll when the barrage fell in the morning. The company leaders agreed that whenever opposition was met between their troops and the barrage they would use an old method of this brigade when in a night attack and short of men—to go straight

⁹⁵ Especially of the 12th Bty. (Maj. W. H. St. Clair). The 3rd Div.'s guns were firing at Berlin Wood. The 5th A.F.A. Bde. and 5th Army Bde. R.H.A. also were supporting the 5th Inf. Bde. and had excellent observation from the hills south of the bend.

for the enemy making as much noise as possible.⁹⁶ So the troops were given a short rest. Meanwhile a German machine-gun persistently firing in front was found by patrols to be in Nich Trench, on the far edge of the knoll, and was marked down to be dealt with at dawn.⁹⁷ The second battalion of the column, the 17th, which was to attack on the right of the 20th was still waiting east of Cléry. The 18th was west of Cléry, the 19th west of the river. Word had come that an order with the final plan of attack would shortly arrive from brigade headquarters and at 11.10 it reached the battalion commanders at Cléry by telephone.⁹⁸ Col. Forbes took it to McDonald's headquarters at the bank below the knoll. It placed on the 19th the task of guarding the right flank; that battalion would cross the river before dawn by the Ommiécourt bridges on which, despite heavy shelling, the 5th Field Company had been working. The attack would start at 5 a.m. The artillery would not attempt a creeping barrage but would bombard a line of obviously important positions well ahead of the troops, lifting its fire after half an hour to a second line (the summit, Bapaume Road, and Über Alles Trench) and half an hour later to a third, beyond the objective; there the bombardment would remain for half an hour to protect consolidation.

By 3 o'clock Forbes had explained this order to as many of the 20th's officers as could be gathered at the bank below the knoll. As the 17th had not yet appeared Forbes became anxious. McDonald also, who had seen the country, was apprehensive that the 17th when making for the Mount would receive heavy fire from its right and rear if Germans remained in Anvil Wood, and he urged that it should take precautions. Shortly before dawn the 17th came along the Péronne road on the 20th's right.

The task ahead was in some ways the most formidable ever faced by Australian infantry. Mont St. Quentin was already a familiar sight; it had faced the attacking battalions most of the day before; as they came over Cléry bridge it backed the centre of the landscape, resembling an old man's pate, shallow,

⁹⁶ In the 17th Capt. Manefield urged that they should yell "like a lot of bushrangers."

⁹⁷ A German coming to the river laden with water cans was captured.

⁹⁸ As often happened during the phase Aug. 8-Oct. 5, a written order came later, (1) to confirm the order, and (2) to record it for reference and for history.

completely bald except for the village trees rising in a tousled tuft above the forehead, and trenches and bands of rusty wire seaming like wrinkles the bare glacis below.⁹⁹ While the officers and N.C.O.'s of the 20th, in the dark, thrust into position their companies on the rear slope of the knoll, the Tortille valley beyond with the gentle mile-long rise to the Mount was hidden. The ditch of the unfinished Canal du Nord on the left might prove an obstacle, and Park Wood on the right at Halle where the road from Cléry to Péronne ran through, and Anvil Wood behind it on the ridge screening Péronne were formidable places to ignore. All knew the Mount to be a famous fortress of the Western Front, and as the hour for the barrage, 5 o'clock, drew near few officers or men in the tired companies of the 20th averaging only 60 rifles, and those of the 17th, averaging 70,¹⁰⁰ believed they had any chance of success. They had no hot meal that night but the 18th Battalion had brought up dry rations for them and at 3 a.m. an issue of rum arrived. On this occasion the old A.I.F. practice, to keep the rum till after the action, was broken in view of the weariness of the men. Never was an issue more welcome.

At 5, as the dark sky began to lighten, the barrage fell nearly a mile ahead. It was a great bombardment, five brigades of field artillery concentrating their fire on a 2,500 yards' arc at Gottlieb Trench low on the Mount while four brigades of heavies pounded the summit and targets on the flanks.¹

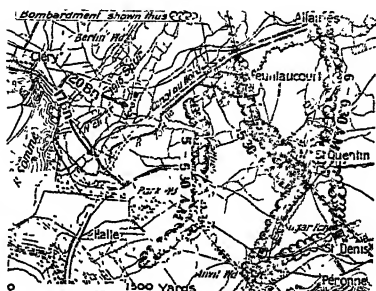
The 20th Battalion, which knew that numbers of the enemy were in the area between itself and the barrage at once started to bomb up the trenches leading over the knoll and from its

⁹⁹ For a photograph of Mount and wire see *Vol. XII, plate 536*.

¹⁰⁰ The strength coming into the line had been: 20th Bn., H.Q.—6 officers and 44 others; Coys.—3 officers and 85, 3 and 59, 3 and 68, 3 and 46, total 18 officers 302 others. 17th Bn., officers 18; other ranks, H.Q.—70, Coys.—68, 70, 72 and 77, total 18 and 357. Both battalions, however, had suffered a few casualties since making these returns. Of the 19th Bn. the companies averaged 4 officers and 50 men.

¹ The density was roughly a field-gun to every 25 yards on the line first barged, and about half that in the two later stages. Some 90 heavy pieces fired on the back area. The field artillery brigades supporting the 5th Aust. Inf. Bde. were (from north to south): 4th A.F.A. Bde. (Lt.-Col. C. A. Callaghan); 5th A.F.A. Bde. (Lt.-Col. H. W. Riggall); 5th Army Bde. R.H.A. (Lt.-Col. A. H. D. West); 298th Army Bde. R.F.A. (Lt.-Col. H. V. B. de Satgé); 16th Army Bde. R.H.A. (Lt.-Col. T. M. Archdale). The rate of fire throughout was 2 rounds per gun per minute for field-guns and 1 for howitzers.

summit saw, across the valley, dawn breaking behind the Mount and against it the fumes and dull flashes of big shell bursts. Behind, upon the Somme marshes and the western side of the Somme valley, there had begun to fall—and continued for hours—a furious German barrage. On the right the 17th had hurriedly got into position astride the Cléry-Péronne road, one company leading on each side of the road, the two others following. At once, within thirty yards, Capt. Allan's company² nearest the river ran into what he described as "a tremendous lot" of Germans; some post was quickly met by nearly every



platoon—but the troops, wherever they saw them, charged with a yell and the Germans, obviously astounded, hardly attempted defence; they simply passed through the advancing line as prisoners. It was generally impossible to send escorts with them. Their captors pointed to the rear where a few limping Australians, early wounded, took them in charge without orders. It was impossible even to collect many of the German machine-guns—they lay behind, unguarded.

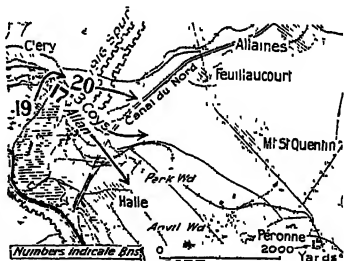
The right company of the 20th, Capt. Barlow's, had been reorganised by him in the half hour before the start into three platoons, Anthon's (14 men), Elliott's (22) and headquarters (15). They arranged to come upon the Germans in Nich Trench from both flanks, Anthon going by the Péronne road, Elliott up Ofiant Alley. The Germans here too seemed staggered by the speed and noise of the attack. Most threw down their arms and ran to be captured. "This raised our spirits considerably," said Anthon afterwards. Another cheering sight from the top of the knoll was that of the 19th Battalion which had crossed at Ommiécourt and was coming up from the Somme in rear. The left company of the 20th, McDonald's, was checked for a minute or two by machine-guns but Lewis gunners at once pushed on and fired while a couple of men

² Capt. H. T. Allan, M.C.; 17th Bn.; and 2/17th Bn., A.I.F., 1940. University student; of Hunter's Hill, N.S.W.; b. Hunter's Hill, 5 Jan. 1895.

crept close enough to throw a bomb. When it burst the Germans surrendered. This method was employed again and again. In Nich Trench Corpl. Frost³ and four men brought in 12 prisoners and two machine-guns. At Morava Trench Germans in trench and dugouts were easily taken though the company ran out of bombs and a big dugout had to be cleared by Sergt. Haughton⁴ merely firing his rifle down the stairway.⁵

By this time it was becoming light. No other Australian troops could yet be seen on the left—actually the 10th Brigade had to defer its start until 6 o'clock—but the bombardment there had begun and was driving Germans down from Berlin Wood towards the 20th's flank. McDonald told Lieut. Guard⁶ to bring up the supporting company and take charge of the flank while he himself, with a sergeant and three men, collected his 150 prisoners and sent them off in charge of some wounded Diggers.

Meanwhile, as the 17th moved south-east along the Péronne road, one platoon cleared the steep bank by the river, and reaching Lost Ravine, a long excavation in the chalk near the canal workings at the mouth of the Tortille, Sergt. Rixon⁷ jumped with his Lewis gun straight into a post killing 3 and capturing 20. Here the 17th was to turn its back on the river and go straight up Brasso Redoubt—one of four old lines of double trench that ran up the long glacis towards the Mount like spokes to a hub. Capt. Allan of the right front company seeing that the battalion would be dangerously caught in flank and rear if the places now ahead of him were held by Germans in



³ L.-Sgt. F. C. Frost, D.C.M. (No. 4411; 20th Bn.). Plasterer; of Newtown; b. Redfern, N.S.W. 1891.

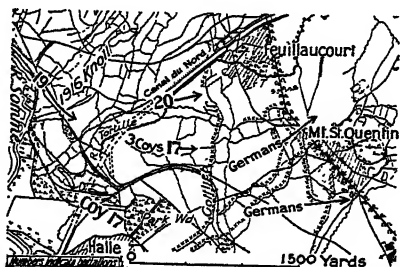
⁴ Sgt. G. W. Haughton (No. 5596; 20th Bn.). Accountant; of Kensington, N.S.W.; b. Wellington, N.Z., 1881.

⁵ Here a German officer who said he was a brigadier demanded that an Australian officer should escort him. With reluctance one private was sent off to guard him and his men.

⁶ Lt. W. H. G. Guard; 20th Bn. Locomotive fireman; of Thirroul, N.S.W.; b. Bulli, N.S.W., 1 Mar. 1894.

⁷ L.-Sgt. J. T. Rixon, D.C.M. (No. 3155; 17th Bn.). Tram conductor; of Waverley, N.S.W.; b. Bega, N.S.W., 17 May 1886.

strength, asked Lieut. Small of the following company to take his place in attacking the Mount while Allan himself went on to clear the flank. The other two companies were already veering eastwards towards the Mount. North of them the widely scattered parties of the 20th were coming down the knoll just where expected. The canal had not been dug in this section except on the extreme left, where forty German artillerymen with four machine-guns fought well but were quickly enveloped. The companies swiftly climbed the foot of the slope towards Gottlieb Trench where the barrage lay.



Ahead along the whole face of the Mount, Germans were running back,⁸ making for its northern and southern shoulders. The Australians, who had expected heavy fighting, hurried, with minds now carefree, half running, trying to catch them and taking occasional shots. As each new group of Germans broke from the trenches ahead the Lewis gunners would throw themselves down for a minute to fire. In this part—differing from the defences on the right—the belts of rusty entanglements contained many gaps and each trench was rushed with a cheer whether occupied or not; many contained Germans who had run till they could run no more and were too breathless and frightened to speak. So the Australians reached Gottlieb Trench and sat along its parapets pulling out their cigarettes while the bombardment still tore at Mont St. Quentin. A few machine-guns on the Mount fired wide and high.

For the troops attacking Mont St. Quentin the fight was for the time being over. The 20th simply walked from Gottlieb Trench to its objective, the Bapaume road, which was there embanked like a railway. The three companies of the 17th which had to take the village made the pace a rush. From Elsa Trench, immediately below the village, a few Germans fired and then made off into the plantations beyond with the

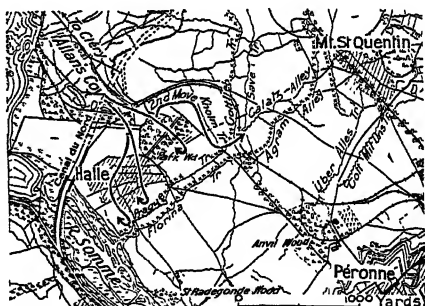
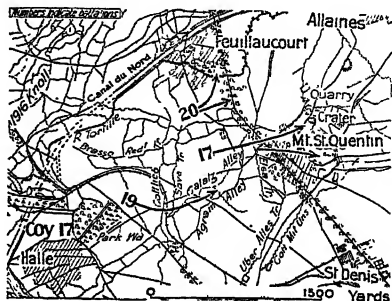
⁸ This sight is described by many. "Germans," said McDonald and Anthon, "seemed to be running from the whole country on the battalion's front and flanks."

17th after them, across the main road, into the rubble heaps over and round which parties scrambled searching for Germans and machine-guns. The barrage was still falling about the wood at the farther end, but Capt. Manefield's⁹ company worked through the southern ruins and Lieut. Croft¹⁰ and his men through the northern to a headquarters at a quarry where they captured a number of draughtsmen and their maps. "Casualties slight, troops awfully bucked," reported Capt. Ronald as the 17th

mopped up. Behind it came the 19th, charged with protecting the right flank. But the change in orders and the move had been so hurried that only its company commanders had received the orders. Two of them,

Capt. McMeekin and Lieut. Pearce,¹¹ were hit before passing on instructions. The battalion headed up two trenches which it mistook (as did most Australians that day) for those intended to be held on the flank (Gott Mit Uns and Über Alles) but which actually were the next pair to the north (Agram and Galatz Alleys).

Meanwhile Allan's company of the 17th working in small parties under Lieuts. Phelps,¹² Robertson¹³ and others on a



⁹ Capt. E. T. Manefield, M.C.; 17th Bn. Shop assistant; of Wallsend, N.S.W.; b. Wallsend, 23 Nov. 1893. Died 23 Jan. 1929.

¹⁰ Lt. F. W. Croft, M.C.; 6th Fld. Coy. Engrs. and 17th Bn. Survey draughtsman; of Epping, N.S.W.; b. Redfern, N.S.W., 22 Feb. 1892.

¹¹ Lt. A. D. Pearce, M.C.; 19th Bn. Insurance clerk; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. Charters Towers, Q'land, 29 Mar. 1883.

¹² Lt. R. T. Phelps; 17th Bn. Grazier; of Tullamore, N.S.W.; b. Paddington, N.S.W., 12 Jan. 1895.

¹³ Lt. W. A. Robertson; 17th Bn. Accountant; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. West Ham, London, 2 Sep. 1888.

front of over 1,000 yards had cleared Park Wood and Halle where the trees and houses were comparatively intact and many machine-guns firing. A group under Sergt. Rixon got as far as the sunken Halle-Radegonde road, but the others on emerging from Park Wood¹⁴ had many men hit by machine-gun fire from the two next trenches—Prague and Florina (continuations of Galatz and Agram). Allan saw the three other companies far up Mont St. Quentin making “a regular old-fashioned charge.” He reported that the Mount had been taken, collected with difficulty his scattered men, and withdrew to Galatz Alley, which he too mistook for Gott Mit Uns, to help guard the flank.

An astonishing feat had been achieved and not only the troops routing on that grey morning¹⁵ among the mounds, with the Nord Canal and its valley below them on one side and old Péronne neatly girt by its moat and grassy ramparts on the other, were elated by it. The battalion commanders back behind the knoll could hardly believe their eyes as the prisoners flooded through. Back near Amiens Rawlinson wrote:

As I was dressing this morning Archie¹⁶ rang me up to say that the Australians had captured Mont St. Quentin. It is indeed a magnificent performance. . . .

Telegraphing to the division he said: “The natural strength of the position is immense and the tactical value of it in reference to Péronne and the whole system of the Péronne defences cannot be overestimated.” To Haig the news was completely unexpected; his intention had been to turn the German line on the Somme by a quite different thrust, from Bapaume. He noted that this feat “turned the line of the river Tortille,” and at once ordered that the III Corps should be reinforced by the new 74th Division so that it could support the Australian Corps by thrusting—apparently in accordance with a plan of General Godley’s—even farther up the same ridge.

The impression everywhere made by the capture of Mont St. Quentin would have been even greater had those who heard of it realised the number and condition of the troops that

¹⁴ This had been a bivouac for German transport.

¹⁵ The sun did not pierce the clouds till 9 o'clock.

¹⁶ Sir Archibald Montgomery, chief of his staff.

achieved it—eight very tired companies comprising some 550 rifles, with a handful of machine-gunners and four companies of 200 in close support. It was immediately evident from the early capture of over 500 prisoners¹⁷ that they had met a force larger than their own. The prisoners taken during the night had belonged to the 21st German Division, but those who poured in at dawn belonged to the Kaiser Alexander (1st Guard Grenadier) Regiment.

Their histories show that the command of the German Second Army on Aug. 29, already apprehending a thrust round the Somme bend, had brought the Kaiser Franz Regt. of Guards (2nd Gd. Gren. Regt.)—reduced to two weak battalions by the fighting at Maricourt—into reserve two miles farther north near Bouchavesnes, and the Augusta and Alexander Regts. to the Allaines area, two miles behind the bend; these two, practically intact, would be ready to counter-attack for the 21st Divn. and the 14th Bavarian Divn. respectively. There was no intention of retiring from the Somme line; orders of the 21st Divn. said that the Somme Canal was to be “especially stubbornly defended,”¹⁸ those of the 5th Bav. Divn. that the Somme line was to be permanently held. Part of the I/Alexander Regt. was placed on Mont St. Quentin as emergency garrison. That afternoon (Aug. 29), the threat at Cléry becoming more evident, the whole Alexander Regt. with three field batteries was ordered to the Mount to hold it at all costs as an emergency position.¹⁹ On Aug. 30 the Augusta Regt. was drawn into the fighting north of Cléry, but not till 5.30 did any hint of danger reach the Alexander Regt. Then it was ordered to send a battalion to 1916 Spur to drive back over Cléry ridge the enemy who had penetrated the 21st Divn.’s line there. The brigade commander under whom it came,²⁰ however, now received reassuring news—probably word of the counter-attack on Lt. Elliott’s platoon—and countermanded the project. Meanwhile Second Army²¹ had decided on the immediate relief of the 21st Divn., the Alexander Regt. taking over the line between the 14th Bav. Divn. at Halle and the Augusta Regt. about Cléry Copse. The relief would take place that night, and morning would thus find the 2nd Guard Divn. in front line. The 94th I.R. (38th Divn.) from Army reserve would take over Mont St. Quentin.

The front should then be firm, for the battalions of Alexander averaged probably over 600 strong²² and a prisoner from Augusta gave his company’s strength as 140. They were also much more rested than the 5th Australian Bde. The III Bn. would occupy a 600 metre front facing Cléry, and the II, on its left, 1,200 metres along the Somme bank.

¹⁷ They eventually numbered over 700.

¹⁸ Also the infantry “must not let the artillery down.”

¹⁹ The I and II Bns. were to be put in line there, III in support.

²⁰ The C.O. 42nd Bde. was curiously enough, a former C.O. of the Alexander Regt. which now shared his headquarters.

²¹ The actual order would be issued by the 51st Corps which relieved the XI Corps staff this day. Two days later it changed places with its southern neighbour, the IV Res. Corps.

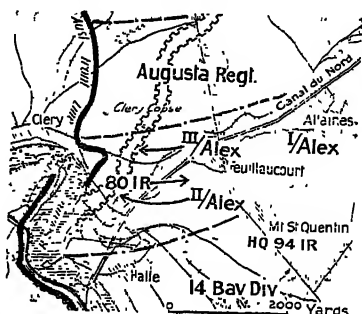
²² When reinforced about July 30 by the disbanded 259th R.I.R. their strength was: I Bn. 618; II Bn. 688; III Bn. 713.

The I stayed at Allaines in reserve. Officers sent forward at dusk to get touch with the 80th and 81st Regts. could not find the 80th, but at 10 p.m. brought word that the enemy was now half a mile east of the river bank. The four forward companies were ordered to clear their sectors and retake the main line. But by then much time had been lost. Part of the ground had been gassed and at least one company (the 5th) which should have been south near Lost Ravine strayed up the 1916 Knoll. The troops had no notion whether friend or enemy was ahead of them, but on the northern part of the knoll garrisons of the 21st Divn. were reached and had just been sent off when the Australians struck.

The history of the Alexander Regt. leaves no doubt as to the reason for the 5th Bde.'s success. It tells how on the north of the knoll the Australians came suddenly, without shell-fire, first from the left, then in front. Here there was a sharp fight with bullets and bombs; a short check; then machine-gun fire from the rear into the right of Alexander and the left of Augusta. Not a man of the right company got back. Next on the south two companies were climbing a trench to the knoll in a crowded file, 200-300 yards long, when men of the 81st came running back and with them Australians right and left, 50 or 60 in number. "It all happened like lightning, and before we had fired a shot we were taken unawares." The Germans ran back to the next cross trench but the Australians were there as quickly, around their left. "We were completely surprised." Presently a machine-gun opened behind their southern flank and troops attacking from there captured them. Sergt. Feige of a southern company (6th) says that hearing shots he fired a flare and saw Australians coming through old communication trenches. "It was all the work of an instant. We were overrun."²³

The four companies in support and reserve with the rear machine-guns of both battalions had the same experience. "Hardly had the alarm of battle been heard than the relieved troops of the 81st poured right through the company immediately followed by the Australians. A wild confusion and bitter *mêlée*."

On Mont St. Quentin the 94th I.R. from Bussu (on the wooded hill east of Péronne) was not yet in position but its headquarters had arrived there overnight. The history of the 96th I.R. says that at 6.30 relieved troops and Bavarians streamed back through its positions near Bussu and away to the east with very demoralising effects. "In the morning," says the adjutant of the 94th, "we were wakened when the Englishman was already within 150 metres . . . we had just time to take rifles and line the edge of the village." The staff opened fire²⁴ but the Australians, it is said, entered the village from the north-east



²³ Only one man of this company came back, Underofficer Reismeyer. He twice ran into Australians and twice escaped.

²⁴ It is said that the regimental commander, Maj. v. Rettberg, shot "about twenty Englishmen" but was wounded by a shell from an advanced "English" battery.

and occupied the wood, headquarters barely escaping to the southern edge of the village, and seven clerks and intelligence personnel being captured. Two anti-tank guns in the quarry north-east of the village were lost.

In addition to all these, south of the Somme bend two weak regiments of the 14th Bav. Divn. at Park Wood and Halle had been routed, mainly by Allan's company, as far as Prague and Florina Trenches; some of them were met three miles away by German reserves marching up. The divisional storm company is said to have made a stand.

On the northern flank the 3rd Division's attack had been arranged at short notice after a day exhausting to both infantry and artillery, and in face of other particular difficulties.²⁵ The timing of the attack was to be taken from the left where the 58th Division, somewhat farther back than the 9th Brigade, started at 5.10 a.m. behind a very slow barrage to attack Marrières Wood. The 9th Brigade, using the 33rd Battalion, started at the time arranged, 5.40,²⁶ but the artillery had not yet received its orders²⁷ and, though it fired, the barrage was thin and machine-guns in the south-west corner of Road Wood stopped the 33rd. One company was late, but Capt. Duncan had swung his company into its place. Maj. Brodziak was now killed while referring to his map. But within twenty minutes the artillery greatly increased its fire. The 33rd were able to raise their heads. A private, George Cartwright,²⁸ stood up and from the shoulder fired at the troublesome German gunner and then walking forward shot him and the two men who took his place. Next, covering his run by exploding a bomb short of the trench, he rushed the

²⁵ One of these was that Gen. Godley of III Corps, whose boundaries had been temporarily altered to allow for an Australian thrust north-eastwards on Aug. 30, but who possibly had in mind his project for the 74th Div., insisted on the old boundaries being resumed. At a late hour the orders of the 3rd Aust. Div. had to be altered to provide for a thrust eastwards while the question was referred to Army. Meanwhile Monash wanted Bouchavesnes Ridge taken. His attitude and Gellibrand's was that it did not matter if both 3rd and 58th Divs. attacked the height south of Bouchavesnes provided one of them got there. The 9th Bde. was ordered to advance eastward to the limit of its barrage and then exploit north-eastwards in front of the 58th Div. to Quarry Farm beyond the Bapaume road. The artillery commander of the 58th agreed to a last minute readjustment of the barrage by which the 3rd Div.'s guns became responsible for covering this part of the British front.

²⁶ As a barrage hastily arranged to cover a line so uncertainly located would be dangerous, the 33rd lined out some distance behind the 34th which then withdrew through it so as to avoid the barrage. Capt. Prior's company of the 33rd, however, lent to the 34th on the previous day, never received the order to do this. The barrage fell upon it, but was very light and the company advanced with the 33rd.

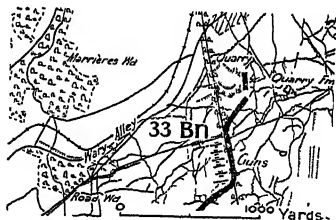
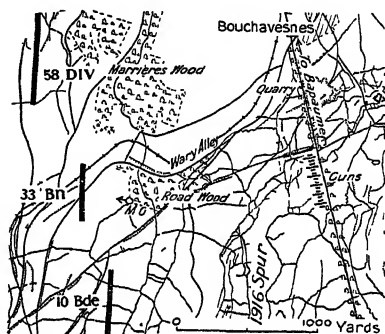
²⁷ The advanced artillery was behind Cléry Ridge. The division had its 7th and 8th Bdes. A.F.A. and the 3rd A.F.A. and 14th R.F.A. (Army) Bdes.

²⁸ Capt. G. Cartwright, V.C.; 33rd Bn. Labourer; of Elsmore, N.S.W.; b. South Kensington, London, 9 Dec. 1894.

gun and captured 9 Germans. The 33rd stood up and cheered him, and then advancing by two's and three's entered the wood.²⁹ Pte. Irwin,³⁰ an Australian half-caste, after attacking like Cartwright, was mortally wounded.

The 33rd was now considerably behind time-table and the 6th London (58th Divn.), having chased the Germans from Marrières Wood, was held up by fire from Wary Alley which curved up the gully between the woods. Coming through from the south Sergt.-Maj. Mathias³¹ cleared these Germans by fire from a Lewis gun.

The 33rd now set to bombing up the old trenches leading up to the upper end of the 1916 Spur where the Péronne-Bapaume road also ran through. On the nearer side of the road a German battery commander with his gun crews and some infantry was blazing with six field-guns into the Australian groups wherever they left shelter. From the southward Lieuts. Turnbull³² and McLean³³ of the 33rd—the latter greatly helped by two leaders of the 10th Brigade, Sergt. Walter³⁴ (39th) and Corpl. Grinton (38th)³⁵—worked up and presently rushed the guns, the German battery com-



²⁹ Cartwright received the Victoria Cross.

³⁰ Pte. W. A. Irwin, D.C.M. (No. 792; 33rd Bn.). Labourer; of Moree, N.S.W.; b. Coonabarabran, N.S.W., 1878. Died of wounds, 1 Sep. 1918.

³¹ Lt. L. J. Mathias, D.C.M., M.M.; 33rd Bn. Labourer; of Gunnedah and Coolah, N.S.W.; b. Walgett, N.S.W., 10 Feb. 1886.

³² Lt. E. A. Turnbull; 33rd Bn. Station hand; of Armidale, N.S.W.; b. Auckland, N.Z., 1 Jan. 1891.

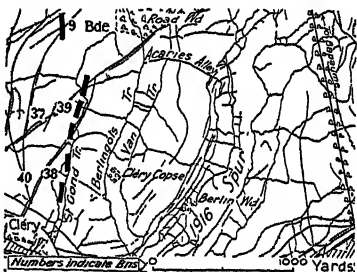
³³ Lt. W. A. McLean, M.C.; 33rd Bn. Farmer; of Armidale district, N.S.W.; b. Armidale, N.S.W., 27 Dec. 1891.

³⁴ Sgt. E. E. Walter, D.C.M. (No. 1007; 39th Bn.). Gas works stoker; of Hamilton, Vic.; b. Armstrong, Vic., 11 Oct. 1889.

³⁵ Sgt. A. V. Grinton, D.C.M. (No. 5024; 38th Bn.). Motor mechanic; of Tragowel, Vic.; b. Tragowel, 21 June 1898.

mander fighting to the last with his revolver.³⁶ Duncan reaching the road realised that the old quarry beyond it was a commanding position and accordingly took it and 40 prisoners and placed a post on its eastern rim. He then went back to Wary Alley, and finding some of the 6th London got Capt. Cooke³⁷ and 20 men to garrison the quarry while the 33rd lined the Bapaume road to the right.

The 10th Brigade's attack had been even more difficult to arrange. At dusk McNicoll at Cléry had provisionally discussed with his colonels the plan for the north-eastward drive in which the brigade would swing up the old 1916 lines and hold them facing east and north. Meanwhile the 38th and 39th, both very weak and tired, would relieve the exhausted 37th, and (so their officers believed) probably attack on September 1. When they went forward to the relief no one knew whether they would find the 37th in Berlingots or St. Gond Trench. They found it in St. Gond. Their artillery had moved up to the east of Hem, and was constantly firing and under heavy shell-fire day and night. Late that night the start lines for the attack and barrage were three times changed and it was eventually decided that the 38th and 39th should attack at 6 a.m. through the 37th instead of relieving it.³⁸



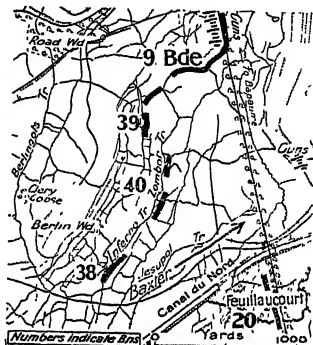
Stirred by the earlier attacks north and south, the Germans laid their barrage on this sector at 5.30 a.m., but mainly about Cléry. At Cléry Copse and Van Trench north of it machine-

³⁶ He was shot by Turnbull.

³⁷ Capt. S. T. Cooke, M.C.; 6th (City of London) Bn., The London Regt.

³⁸ The order to attack at 6 a.m. reached headquarters of the 38th at 3.25, while the 37th was still being sought for. Only one runner could be found who knew where one company was; but through it Lt. C. T. Crispe (Preston, Vic.), intelligence officer of the 38th, found the others and through them the companies of his own battalion. At 4.30 came a message fixing a new starting-line 400 yards west of Berlingots Trench, the line previously laid down. At 5.50, just as Lt. Crispe brought the companies back there, Lt. J. A. B. Churchill (Brunswick, Vic.) came up with particulars as to the objectives. The orders could surely never have reached the troops if McNicoll's command post had been farther back. A close barrage was very difficult to arrange, but Lt.-Col. Henderson (39th) strongly opposed any dispensing with this assistance and urged the strongest possible bombardment of the defences ahead.

gunners opposed the 39th,³⁹ but Sergt. Walter worked through Acaries Alley to Van Trench and Road Wood where, as already mentioned, he helped the 33rd. Farther south the right after a sharp tussle crossed a deep gully, there intervening, to the old French line.⁴⁰ On the far side of this gully lay Berlin Wood, but progress was now easy. The 37th and 40th Battalions were following, and a company of the 40th, put into a gap between 38th and 39th, here took the surrender of forty Germans who marched to the rear without escort. The few officers now with the 38th were uncertain as to their objective; but Lieut. Baxter, knowing that the Péronne road was part of it, headed with a handful of men up the trenches towards it. They were faced at different times by several machine-guns and two field-guns shooting direct. But the Lewis gunners cleverly shot the guns' crews and they reached a position near the road. Some of the 40th reached the old German front line (Inferno and Zombor Trenches)⁴¹ east of this ridge, looking out to Mont St. Quentin. In that sector, the spur on which the Bapaume road ran down to Feuillaucourt was still open; but the 9th Brigade's right had reached its upper end.



At 8 o'clock, on the strength of the information received from all sectors, General Monash ordered the exploitation of this great success. The 6th Brigade was to pass through the 5th on the Mount to continue the main thrust towards Lieramont. Artillery must move up to support it. The 7th Brigade would follow

**Reserves
move up**

³⁹ Casualties were severe. Of the company commanders Capt. P. L. Smith (S. Yarra, Vic.) was mortally wounded here and Lt. C. E. Garrard (Ballarat, Vic. and Broken Hill, N.S.W.) killed. Lt. S. Le Fevre (Burwood, Vic.) had been killed by a shell at his headquarters the night before. Lts. V. J. Crotty (Elwood, Vic.) and R. H. Overton (Morwell, Vic.) were wounded at this stage.

⁴⁰ Rifles and machine-guns in Cléry Copse still shot at stretcher-bearers passing. Observing this, Lt. J. C. Anderson's company of the 37th shot all the Germans in the copse.

⁴¹ Coming up Inferno Trench they met Germans coming down. The leading man, Pte. F. D. Brock (Queenstown, Tas.; died 6 Sep. 1941) fired and the Germans ran.

the 6th across the river. At the same time, although Brig-Genl. Elliott was seeking some way of getting his brigade (15th) of the 5th Division frontally across the marshes south of Péronne, Monash decided to make sure of safeguarding his right by bringing a sister brigade (14th) of that division around through Cléry. The flanks must help the centre at all costs.

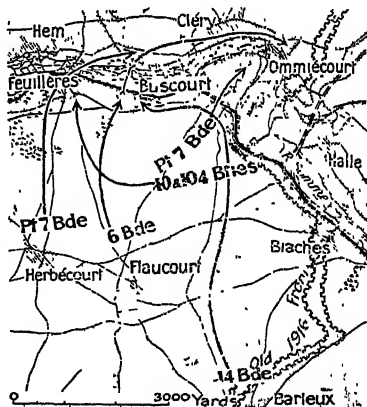
Casualties no longer matter (he told Gellibrand at 8.35 a.m. on the telephone). We must get Bouchavesnes spur and protect Gen. Rosenthal's left.

Presumably he telephoned his instructions similarly to Hobbs.⁴²

The 6th Brigade, then encamped in old trenches north of Flaucourt, crossed by a pontoon bridge and footway completed by the 6th Field Company during the previous night at Buscourt, the 23rd Battalion leading at 11.30 a.m., along the towpath and, with few casualties,⁴³ through Cléry, where big German shells raised fountains from the marshes. The 14th Brigade left Barleux at noon and was to cross at Ommécourt; but when

it reached the heights in the Somme angle and its leaders met their brigadier, General Stewart, down by the Chord Canal, it was found that the bridges were impassable through shell-fire, which had killed and wounded half the engineers there and driven them temporarily from their tasks.⁴⁴

At 9.15 the 2nd Division had advised General Hobbs to send part of the brigade by the Buscourt bridge, and the whole was now directed thither. It crossed between 2.30 and 6. After it came the two last batteries of the 4th A.F.A. Brigade. Meanwhile the 7th Brigade also was on the move, the 27th and 25th Battalions marching by



⁴² The general order was confirmed by the issue of "Battle Instructions Series C, No. 15."

⁴³ During a halt for a meal a shell burst in a camp fire of the 21st.

⁴⁴ A traffic bridge was now being built across the canal at the Chord. Lt. A. R. Parkinson was wounded and his brave corporal, Rand, killed; but Sgt. H. V. Lucas (Brighton, Vic.) with Sprs. V. Trevelton (Charters Towers, Q'land), L. F. J. Gordon (Townsville, Q'land), G. S. Neish (Melbourne) and others finished the work.

Ommiécourt,⁴⁵ the 26th and 28th by Feuillères. But as the 14th and 7th Brigades approached Cléry word came from their reconnoitring officers that the ground beyond the bend was crowded with troops—the 6th Brigade, which was to have gone on a mile to the south-east, was still there. The triangular flat was under German machine-gun fire. Most of the 14th Brigade and half the 7th now squeezed themselves among the others under the steep banks of the knoll and the river.⁴⁶ Beside them barked batteries of the 4th A.F.A. Brigade. Prisoners and wounded streamed through. Cookers steamed with the evening meal. Geysers spouted from the pounded marshes. Brig.-Genl. Wisdom stopped the 25th Battalion at Ommiécourt and Feuillères and the 28th behind Cléry; and the 53rd (14th Bde.) turned into the trenches north of Cléry.

Something evidently had held up the 6th Brigade's advance to its point of assembly north of Halle. The 5th Brigade believed its flank to be in Gott Mit Uns Trench, resting on Anvil Wood, and the divisional commander, Rosenthal, had accordingly ordered the brigade to use its reserves in pushing on not merely to St. Denis but to the hills east of Péronne. At 7.30 a.m., however, an airman had dropped a message for 2nd Division Headquarters saying that many machine-guns had been turned on him from between Halle and Anvil Wood, which were behind the supposed position of the flank. Rosenthal had thereupon ordered the 6th Brigade to clear the enemy from this "pocket" before passing through the 5th Brigade.⁴⁷

At that stage Monash hoped the thrust by the 6th Brigade on the summit and the 14th on the flank would take place that afternoon. To support the main thrust the 4th A.F.A. and 16th R.H.A. Brigades had been ordered across the Somme. Soon after midday the 23rd Battalion, first of the 6th Brigade, advancing astride of the Cléry-Péronne road precisely as the 17th Battalion had done that morning, found Halle and Park Wood still empty, but as its companies emerged from those places they were stopped by machine-guns firing across their front from Florina Trench and also from a copse where the

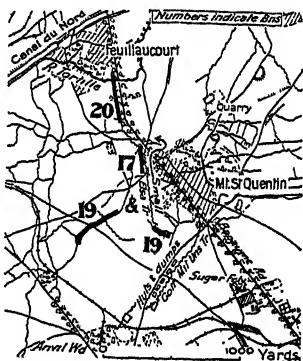
⁴⁵ They came from near Herbécourt and doubtless reached Ommiécourt by the towpath, whose trees would hide them.

⁴⁶ Lt. C. W. O. Oswald (Semaphore, S.A.), 27th Bn., was killed here.

⁴⁷ At 1 p.m. he added to this preliminary task those previously laid on the 5th Bde., of taking Anvil Wood, St. Denis, and the heights east of Péronne.

Péronne road ran through that trench-line. At this juncture a party of Australians north of the 23rd fired on the machine-gunner at the copse chasing him away, and then advanced beside the 23rd. This party proved to be a company of the reserve battalion of the 5th Brigade, the 18th, which had already been set by its brigade to the same task as that now placed on the 23rd.

But while headquarters from brigade upwards apparently pictured the troops on the Mount as pursuing an enemy demoralised, reserves and all, the battalion commanders at the Knoll had quickly learnt that their handful of men would actually be hard put to it to hold the ground won. Small's company of the 17th forming the right of the attack had received heavy fire from its open flank towards Péronne; with the other two forward companies of the 17th it had possibly 150 men for holding the three-quarter-mile front round the village. The scattered parties were mostly invisible to one another. On both flanks Germans began to creep through communication trenches up to and between them; machine-guns set up close ahead rendered movement dangerous, and finding themselves unsupported the groups fell back separately to the obvious rallying place—the main road through the village—and thence to Elsa trench.⁴⁸ Some



of the 19th were now with them and officers and N.C.O.'s tried to get touch with the 20th on the left. Lieut. Small searched vainly along Elsa Trench and its extension east of the road where Germans drove him back into Elsa Trench. Sergt. Simpson⁴⁹ of the 20th had already visited that corner and missed the 17th. However someone had seen it attacking the quarry, and another sergeant presently found Small in Elsa Trench.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Some probably also held the head of Uber Alles Trench (near Gott Mit Uns).

⁴⁹ L.-Sgt. L. N. Simpson, M.M. (No. 3265; 20th Bn.). Linotype mechanic; of Parramatta and Ashfield, N.S.W.; b. Harris Park, N.S.W., 22 Feb. 1894.

⁵⁰ At the third tree south of the bend in the road.

The map shows the Mt. Quenlin area. A route is marked with numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100. The route starts near the Galtby River and ends near the Aerodrome B. The map also shows the Galtby River, Aerodrome B, and various hills and valleys. A legend indicates that numbers on the route indicate British positions.

⁵³ Lt. E. S. Bonham; 18th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Penshurst, N.S.W.;
b. Petersham, N.S.W., 31 May 1894.

huts and stores which, by the map, lay close between Gott Mit Uns and Über Alles Trenches. From an old aerodrome west of these came heavy fire but, working along the Albert-Ham railway on its right, the company enveloped a house held by 50 Germans. These seemed inclined to surrender; but as fire now came from both flanks Clark turned his Lewis gun upon them and gradually withdrew his men to Galatz Alley.⁵⁴ South of the Cléry-Péronne road the 23rd, having enfiladed from Halle the defending machine-gunners, seized Prague and Florina Trenches despite the strong belts of wire. To get round Anvil Wood a party worked down Johannes Trench, but was fired on in rear by Germans still at the copse and had to withdraw. A party of Lieut. Holland's⁵⁵ company went three-quarters of a mile along a trench to Radegonde, where Germans shooting down from a window wounded Lieut. Field⁵⁶ and eleven others. Intense fire came from buildings south of Anvil Wood.

What the 23rd and 18th thus really did was to extend the line of the previous flank and oust some dangerous machine-guns. The two companies of the 18th found Galatz Alley and most of Agram well held by the 19th and 17th, whom they reinforced; the other two companies occupied Gottlieb.

But from 11.30 a heavy bombardment had pounded the trenches held by the 17th and 20th killing and wounding many, reducing the small posts, and rendering communication very difficult. The 20th manning
17th and niches along the Bapaume road embankment
20th was dangerously isolated; machine-gun fire now reached it not only from the Mount but from the brick wall of the plantation on the Australian side of the road. Clearly the 17th had given ground.

It is now known that the German forces that first poured to the Mount on news of the attack were, on the north side part of the 1 Bn. Alexander Regt. from Allaines a mile away in the Tortille valley, and on the south two battalions of the 94th I.R. already ordered thither from Bussu. The 1/Alexander had been brigade reserve but at 7.20, when it was given back to the regiment, the regimental commander hearing that

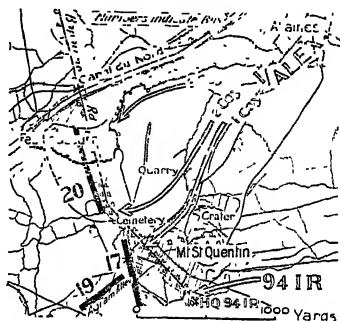
⁵⁴ The two companies later reinforced the 19th in Agram Alley.

⁵⁵ Lt. H. C. Holland, M.C.; 23rd Bn. School teacher; of Maryborough, Vic.; b. St. Arnaud, Vic., 28 Feb. 1890.

⁵⁶ Lt. H. G. Field; 23rd Bn. Monumental setter; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Geelong, Vic., 21 Mar. 1892.

Australians were in Feuillaucourt, galloped to Haut-Allaines and ordered it to attack astride the Nord Canal. As, however, it was by then evident that the Australians had also captured Mont St. Quentin, the 1st Coy. made for the Mount and presently met machine-gun fire "and shells of small calibre."⁵⁷

Emerging from dead ground on the slope it saw some Australians running back and in a quarry came on the two anti-tank guns scribbled over with chalk (evidently marked by the Australians as regimental trophies). Next, at a huge crater there emerged from a dugout the staff of the 81st I.R. whom the Australians had actually passed but not yet made prisoners. The Australians were now running; two Lewis gunners who held on were shot beside their gun. Many were withdrawing down the slope, but about the road the leading Germans ran into short range fire and bombing. The keenest were killed and the company stopped.⁵⁸ The 2nd Coy. reached the road just north of the Mount. The 3rd making for Feuillaucourt was met by machine-gun fire from the scrub south-west of that "village," and found the advance difficult.



On the other side of the Mount the commander of the 94th I.R. set its three battalions to counter-attack and, pouring through the saps from Bussy, they occupied the village.

Meanwhile at 8.51 the 51st Corps had issued an order: "the enemy has crossed the Somme at Halle (*sic*) and is attacking east and north-east. He is to be driven back by counter-attack on the Somme. 21st Divn. will counter-attack with all available forces." The 94th I.R. (38th Divn.) was to be given to the 14th Bav. Divn. to retake Park Wood and Halle, the 96th replacing it as garrison of the Mount. But the 94th was already fighting—it crossed the road but owing to machine-gun fire enfilading from the north it could not go beyond the brick walled plantation. The I/96th coming up behind was placed in support in the communication trenches east of the village. Later it was ordered to retake Feuillaucourt, the III/96th replacing it.

The 20th's left had been exposed throughout. A post under Sergt. Inskip⁵⁹ had been placed among the mounds of Feuillaucourt. Early in the morning soon after their own attack ended, the men of the 20th had seen the 3rd Division's barrage reach the Bapaume road far up the hill to their left, but the infantry following it had stopped at the old French front line. Two

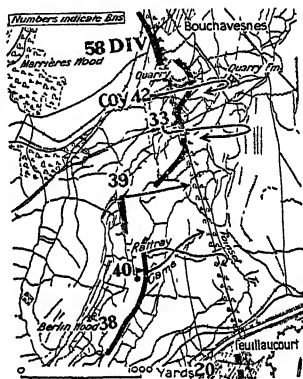
⁵⁷ Presumably 13-pounders from the Royal Horse Artillery.

⁵⁸ The attack had cost it only 3 killed and 3 wounded.

⁵⁹ Sgt. J. Inskip (No. 898; 20th Bn.). Labourer; of Cobargo, N.S.W.; b. Cobargo, 1888

German field-guns up there were forced to retire along the Tortille valley.⁶⁰

But the 3rd Division made a second attempt to secure the road and the ground north-east of it. At 9.25 a.m. instructions based on Monash's order to seize Bouchavesnes spur regardless of casualties had reached the 9th Brigade. Its second attack was made by the tired 33rd, only 140 strong⁶¹ and an attached company of the 42nd (11th Bde.) under Capt. Trudgian,⁶² 62 strong. Their patrols reached the hedge of Quarry Farm,⁶³ 400 yards east of the road and three parallel banks farther south. But in the Farm area were Germans who fought the local attack and also enfiladed the banks. Lieut. Warwick⁶⁴ (42nd) was killed and Lieut. Wallace⁶⁵ (33rd) wounded⁶⁶ and the line driven back. At 2 p.m. arrived an order for the rest of the 42nd to support the effort; but it was then clear that the area was exposed to machine-guns which could not be subdued without a barrage, and the order was cancelled.



German records show that the 9th Bde.'s attack had come against the southern flank of the 232nd Divn. holding Bouchavesnes. The Fusilier (or III) battalion of the Kaiser Franz (2nd Guard Gren.) Regt. was thrown in from reserve and fought there all day.

Monash's order reached the 10th Brigade later than the 9th

⁶⁰ The 20th fired at them at long range; they were almost certainly those driven back by Lt. Baxter (38th).

⁶¹ Capt. Prior's company, which had fought throughout the 30th, was in support.

⁶² Lt. (T/Capt.) C. S. Trudgian, M.C.; 42nd Bn. Telegraph operator; of Gympie, Q'land; b. Gympie, 2 Mar. 1896.

⁶³ Trudgian's company had already been fiercely engaged in the attack on the road, where it had to use German bombs when its own were expended.

⁶⁴ Lt. R. Warwick; 9th and 42nd Bns. Shearer; of Brisbane; b. Battersea, London, 22 Apr. 1879. Killed in action, 31 Aug. 1918.

⁶⁵ Lt. C. C. Wallace; 33rd Bn. School teacher; of Chatswood, N.S.W.; b. Picton, N.S.W., 27 Aug. 1886.

⁶⁶ L.-Cpl. J. H. Mann (Warwick, Q'land), 42nd Bn., and two men were cut off but Mann dismantled his Lewis gun, threw away the parts, and worked his way out with his men. Pte. J. W. Ogg (Thornbury, Vic.; died 14 Nov. 1940) and another were captured, wounded. The Germans treated Ogg roughly until his recapture became probable, when their manner changed.

in the form of a direction to push to the road. At 3 p.m. Lieuts. Game and Rattray (40th), with their companies each about 30 strong, worked up communication trenches to the road. Lieut. Jackson, the signalling officer, attached himself to Rattray's company, which, after capturing an officer and 23 men in a mêlée, pushed east of the road. At Poinot Trench they were driven back to the road bank. A force of Germans now tried to cross the highway and envelop their left but Game's company shot the first three and picked off others wherever they showed.

The Germans were the 7th Coy. of the Augusta Regt. which counter-attacked, the 11th Coy. of the Alexander joining in. The history of this regiment says that its troops even penetrated to Cléry ridge (almost certainly an error) and cites the thrust as proof "that even good Australian troops were by no means invincible if strongly attacked."

At this juncture the 40th saw a German counter-attack deploying from Allaines and advancing against the left of the 2nd Division at Feuillaucourt. The movement was seen also by two artillery officers⁶⁷ at the 40th's headquarters on 1916 Spur and they directed their guns by telephone upon it.

But by working down the canal to the unfinished lock the Germans trickled to Feuillaucourt and to the road embankment

**The 20th
counter-
attacked**

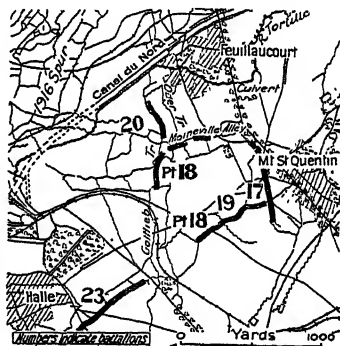
between it and the Mount. The two withdrawn field-guns opened fire again, first upon the 40th, then upon the 20th along the road-bank, where shells burst low and angrily. Lieut. Guard commanding the 20th's left, probing through the culvert where Maj. McDonald had his headquarters, ran straight into a party of German scouts and shot two, the rest fleeing. Shortly afterwards Germans advanced by rushes to a sunken road close ahead. The 20th exposed themselves freely to shoot but the shells and enfilade from Feuillaucourt so thinned the line that Guard ordered it back to Oder Trench and informed McDonald. A few of the wounded had to be left in the culvert and Sergt. Inskip's party, not receiving the order, stayed in Feuillaucourt. Oder Trench was unrecognisable, but after withdrawing 600 yards the line sheltered

⁶⁷ Maj. H. J. H. Glover; (Brewarrina, N.S.W.) 26th Bty. A.F.A. and Capt. D. L. Davies (Ballarat, Vic.), 25th Bty. A.F.A.

in Gottlieb, and by holding Moineville Alley supported the 17th who were believed to be still in Elsa Trench. McDonald had only 50 men but Capt. Kaepfel⁶⁸ (18th) lent half a company; the 6th Machine Gun Company held posts throughout the area and nearly every infantry post had a German machine-gun.⁶⁹

The attack on the road had been made by the I Bn. Alexander Regt., trickling partly from the Mount along Varna Trench and the road bank and partly from Feuillaucourt and the Tortille. A remnant of the II Bn. also advanced north of the canal. All, however, eventually withdrew behind the road. The I/96th I.R. at the Mount also was ordered to retake Feuillaucourt, but meanwhile night fell and it, too, merely lined the Bapaume road.

On the Bapaume road north of Feuillaucourt the two companies of the 40th (3rd Divn.) as they could not be reinforced, were withdrawn by Col. Lord at 5 p.m. to 1916 Spur; but at 6 p.m. the 10th Brigade was ordered to reoccupy the road so as to give a straight starting line for the 11th Brigade which would attack next morning behind a barrage. Col. Henderson (39th) with Lord's agreement⁷⁰ represented that his troops were too exhausted for the effort. Nevertheless cheered by a promise of immediate relief, they actually made it on the left. Word next arrived that owing to the uncertainty of the position⁷¹ the 11th Brigade would assemble in the gully in rear. The posts were therefore again withdrawn at 2 a.m.



To all concerned in the 6th Brigade it had for some time

⁶⁸ Capt. C. H. Kaepfel, M.C.; 18th Bn. Schoolmaster and author; of North Sydney and Armidale, N.S.W.; b. Mittagong, N.S.W., 13 Jan. 1887.

⁶⁹ A dozen were collected and the Lewis gun sergeant, C. A. Clark (Sydney) taught the men to fire them. Col. Forbes sent up the Lewis gun officer, Lt. W. G. L. Bain, (Sydney) with the battalion staff and runners. Capt. Barlow and Lt. Elliott had been wounded; Lt. F. J. G. Noble (Marrickville, N.S.W.) had been killed at the start.

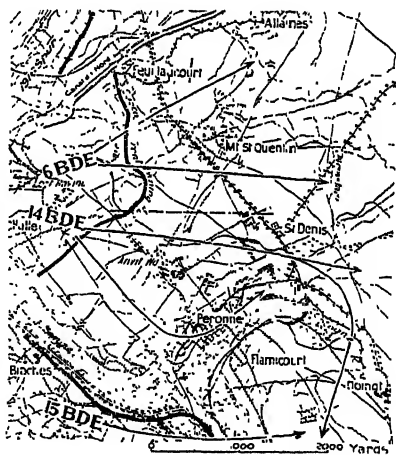
⁷⁰ Maj. Maudsley of the 38th had been killed by a shell that morning; the acting adjutant, Lt. H. Robbins (Fairfield, Vic.), carried on the command until Lt.-Col. Henderson, who was ill, was able to take control of both battalions.

⁷¹ The withdrawal of the 20th Bn. was probably the cause.

been evident that the 5th Brigade was not where its commander and General Rosenthal believed it to be, either on the right flank or on the Mount.⁷² **A change of plan** Lieut.-Cols. Brazenor⁷³ (23rd) and James (24th) begged General Robertson of the 6th Brigade to come up to their headquarters at Lost Ravine and judge for himself. He did so, and though he was afterwards criticised for leaving his headquarters the visit caused him to realise that higher headquarters wrongly conceived the position and that his plan must be changed. Two battalions (23rd and 21st) must attack south-eastwards to clear Anvil Wood and the slope from it to St. Denis and Péronne, though this left only one (24th) to attack along the Mount and one (22nd) in reserve. He now planned provisionally for this to be done at dawn next day, but all the colonels urged that a battalion of the 5th Division should, if possible, be obtained for the south-eastward attack. Robertson managed to inform General Rosenthal by telephone. Rosenthal arranged for a conference at Robertson's headquarters as soon as he should return. Meanwhile the four colonels with their company commanders waited impatiently for the definite order.

At 11.30 the telephone rang, bringing the decision. The conference had met at

9.30, all three infantry brigadiers of the 2nd Division being present as well as Stewart (14th Bde.) of the 5th Division.⁷⁴ By then the 5th Brigade knew that most of its troops were



Arrows show attack finally planned.

⁷² At 2 p.m. Gen. Martin believed it to hold Mont St. Quentin; and that half the 18th would clear Anvil Wood and the other half with the 17th establish the line beyond the Mount before the 6th Bde. attacked.

⁷³ Col. W. Brazenor, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 23rd Bn. 1916-18. Accountant; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 7 Apr. 1888.

⁷⁴ Also the C.R.A. 2nd Div. (Br.-Gen. O. F. Phillips) and representatives of both divisional staffs.

back at Gottlieb and Save Trenches, though Elsa Trench and the head of Gott Mit Uns were also believed to be held.⁷⁵ It was decided⁷⁶ that the 14th Brigade should now undertake the south-eastward thrust capturing Péronne, if possible, and passing round it to the 5th Division's proper objective on the hills east and south. The 15th Brigade, which (Elliott thought) had now found a possible track through the marshes south of Péronne,⁷⁷ would continue to try that route. Thus the 6th Brigade (2nd Divn.) would be left free for its task of passing through the 5th, retaking the Mount and Feuillaucourt, and pushing to Tortille and Darmstadt Trenches which crossed the ridge half a mile beyond Mont St. Quentin Wood. The present position of the front being obscure, the artillery would, as on the 31st, merely lay a heavy bombardment on important targets ahead of the attack, lifting after half an hour to a line of farther targets and half an hour later to still more distant ones.⁷⁸

Australians usually pressed for their assaults to be launched at earliest dawn with a quick rate of advance, while the British preferred clearer light and slower pace. On this occasion the 3rd Division and 6th Brigade wanted their attacks—which now obviously could not take place before September 1st—to be launched at 5 a.m. But Brig.-Genl. Stewart of the 14th Brigade had to change completely the plans discussed with his battalion commanders in the morning. A conference was indispensable, and he summoned them to his headquarters west of

⁷⁵ As so often the truth was ascertained by personal reconnaissance by the brigade major, Maj. W. P. MacCallum.

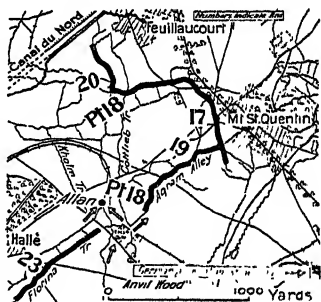
⁷⁶ Presumably by reference to Gen. Monash.

⁷⁷ Engineers and 5th Pioneers had been constantly at this work. This route had been found by Lt. T. B. Midelton (Waverley, N.S.W.), 15th Fld. Coy. Crossing the canal by the 7th Fld. Coy.'s bridge of floats, and working 500 yards north up the other side of the Canal, he found the piles of an old German Decauville railway leading east through the marshes. Part of the 14th Fld. Coy. under Lt. A. B. Littler (Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.), and Capt. Peacock's company of the 57th which held the line there, assisted the 15th Fld. Coy. to make a bridge along this track leading to an island near the far side of the marsh. Several other tracks were tried with the help of collapsible boats. The engineers expected to have this one, 300 yards long, finished on Sep. 1.

⁷⁸ The 6th Bde. would be supported by the 2nd Div. Arty., and 5th R.H.A. and 298th R.F.A. Bdes. (the 16th R.H.A. Bde. had been stopped at Feuillères on its being ascertained that Mont St. Quentin was still in German hands). The 14th A.I. Bde. would be supported by the 5th Div. Arty. just west of Barleux, and the 12th A.F.A. and 23rd R.F.A. (Army) Bdes. north-east of it. The rates of fire were, for the 2nd Div.'s attack the same as on Aug. 31, for the 5th Div.'s 2 rounds per gun per minute for both guns and howitzers. The bombardments for both divisions would begin at 5.30, the 2nd Div.'s lasting till 7 a.m. and the 5th Div.'s till 8.30. The 5th Div. would use 10 per cent of smoke shell and one battery would maintain till 8.30 a smoke screen on the high ground east of Eterpigny.

the Somme south of Ommiécourt. As the 6th Brigade's conference did not end till near midnight he told his colleagues there that his battalions could not possibly receive their orders and assemble for the attack before 6 a.m. That hour was therefore fixed for the 2nd Division also; the 3rd would attack at the same hour as III Corps, 5.30.

The battalion commanders of the 6th Brigade at their joint headquarters in Lost Ravine received their orders by telephone at midnight and passed them to the company officers waiting there. It was none too early. Two battalions—23rd and 24th—would attack on practically the same fronts as the 17th and 20th on the previous day. The right of the 23rd would pass 500 yards south of the Mount and the 14th Brigade farther south. The 24th had been in Gottlieb Trench close behind its starting line, Save Trench, since 6.30 p.m.; the trench was crowded and intensely shelled,⁷⁹ but most of the bombardment went over. The 23rd under the earlier plan would have started from Agram Alley, but reconnaissance parties now found that the Germans had actually penetrated to that trench and the nearer end of Gottlieb and were holding parts of them behind blocks of earth and wire. The 5th Brigade's sentries in Galatz and Agram Alleys had noticed, soon after dark, German flares fired behind them from Johannes Trench and part of Gottlieb Trench near the copse. Lieut. Clark (18th) in Agram Alley took steps to guard his rear. Capt. Allan, at the junction of Galatz, thought there were Germans behind him in Kholm Trench and was presently attacked from the rear. Some egg bombs burst around and flares sailed over and sizzled in the grass. Allan had fifteen men with two Lewis guns, a captured machine-gun, and a machine-gun of the 6th Company. These opened so hotly that the Germans withdrew towards the upper end of Florina Trench from which they continued to fire machine-guns all

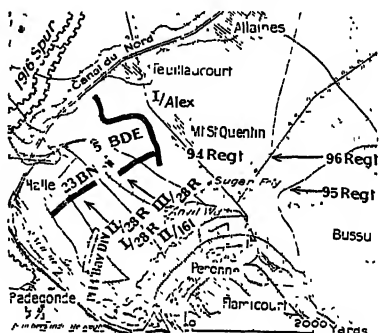


⁷⁹ Lts. E. M. Martin (Armadae, Vic.) and C. J. R. Newton (Horsham, Vic.) were killed.

night.⁸⁰ About dawn trench-mortars in the German lines here opened, and an artillery bombardment fell behind the front among the assembling 14th Brigade; but no attack followed.

It is now known that the companies of the 23rd and 18th, in their advance at noon on this southern flank, had run into part of the counter-attack ordered by the 51st German Corps at 8.30 to recover the Somme line. The 185th Divn. at Péronne was to co-operate with the 14th Bavarian at Halle. The 28th R.I.R. (185th Divn.) was holding Péronne with its I Bn. in Anvil Wood and on the rise west of it; the chief of staff of the 185th Divn. found it there in touch with the three battalions of the 94th I.R. at the south-eastern corner of Mont St. Quentin, and with the 25th Bav. I.R. to the south-west. "North of Péronne" says the history of the 28th, "little was left in the front line. Everywhere troops were wandering without arms; whole companies lay tired of battle and full of revolutionary fairy tales, so that it was difficult to keep those of the 28th free from the poison." The 28th R.I.R. advanced soon after noon, with its III and II Bns. in front line, their right starting from the Sugar Factory, the II/161st I.R. in second line, and the 4th and 9th Batteries, 185th F.A.R., in close support. The I/28th was presently ordered to follow the left. The battalions were at once met by well aimed shrapnel, and by machine-gun fire from the western edge of the Mount and the scrub near it, where the 94th I.R. seemed unable to make headway. The 9th Bty. shelled, but could not entirely silence, these machine-guns. By 1.30 the copse at Florina Trench had been reached and the left was 100 yards from Halle when the III/28th was suddenly attacked "by a strong force" and driven back. The II/161st was ordered up. Meanwhile the 4th Bty. from the open had shelled the empty village of Halle which the II/28th entered, recapturing some Bavarian mail bags. But both battalions were quickly driven back to their starting line. The I/28th was now in the fight. The 4th Bty. firing point blank and the 2nd M.G. Coy. of the 28th R.I.R. stopped "strong masses" of Australians emerging from the copse at Florina Trench, but could not completely stop them. The 28th itself was brought to a halt at the eastern edge of the copse.

The counter-attacking force was next put under the 38th Divn. and a new effort ordered, the 38th to advance from Mont St. Quentin, the 185th Divn. conforming. The 38th apparently was to throw in its 95th Regt.—the 94th and 96th were already fighting on the Mount. The 4th Bty. fired from the house by the Ham railway. This time the I and II, 28th R.I.R. attacked; on the right the I Bn., to avoid fire from near Mont St. Quentin, ordered its troops to dribble forward through



⁸⁰ Allan now obtained 12 men from Lt. Maxwell (18th) in Brasso Redoubt.

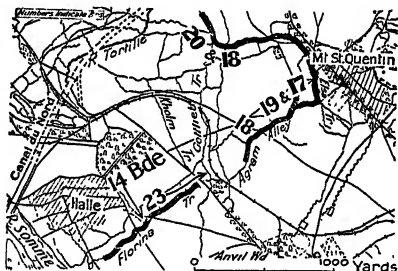
trenches.⁸¹ They seized the copse but could not reach Halle (some of their men when captured said that one company refused to attack). The 38th Divn. made little progress. At 8.30 p.m. came orders to hold fast, but at 10.30 both divisions were ordered to attack again; Halle and the Somme banks were to be taken at all costs before dawn. The shelling before dawn was probably preparation for this attack.

During the night Lieut. Jenkins,⁸² whose company would lead the 23rd from Florina Trench to Gottlieb and Save Trenches from which it would start for Mont St. Quentin, found⁸³ that by making a détour through Kholm Trench he could still reach the

**The approach,
September 1**

starting point without fighting. But by the time this was discovered only twenty minutes remained for doing so and there was only one way to be in time: to clear the Germans from the direct route through Florina and Agram Trenches. The 14th Brigade had come up to relieve the 23rd in Florina Trench,⁸⁴ and the 23rd there now turned left and, under deadly fire from a

machine-gun in the copse, hopped in single file across the Péronne road, which interrupted the northern end of Florina Trench.⁸⁵ In the trench north of the road the fighting patrol which was leading found itself faced by a German machine-gun behind a bar-



ricade of wire, with two similar barriers farther on. The first man, Corpl. Finlay,⁸⁶ was killed and his men ran back. Jenkins sent a young runner, Pte. Mactier,⁸⁷ to see what was stopping them. Mactier, who carried a revolver and several bombs, ran forward through the

⁸¹ Its history says that Australian dead and wounded lay everywhere. "Only few prisoners were made, as to bring them back was almost impossible."

⁸² Lt. F. J. Jenkins, M.C., M.M.; 23rd Bn. School teacher; of Beaufort, Vic.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 17 June 1892.

⁸³ By sending out a patrol under Sgt. G. Warren (Geelong, Vic.)

⁸⁴ Headquarters at Lost Ravine were heavily shelled, and Lt. E. M. Shearwood (Malvern, Vic.), 14th Bde., waiting there for the guides, was killed.

⁸⁵ In crossing these four yards Lieut. Holland's company had 2 killed and 3 wounded.

⁸⁶ Cpl. R. Finlay (No. 6328; 23rd Bn.). Tailor; of Geelong West, Vic.; b. Londonderry, Ire., 9 Nov. 1894. Killed in action, 1 Sep. 1918

⁸⁷ Pte. R. Mactier, V.C. (No. 6939; 23rd Bn.). Farmer; of Tatura, Vic.; b. Tatura, 17 May 1890. Killed in action, 1 Sep. 1918.

patrol, threw a bomb over the block, and climbed over. Those in rear saw a machine-gun thrown out of the trench and going on found six Germans there dead. But Mactier had kept straight on, through 20 Germans who held up their hands as he appeared. Ahead was another machine-gun crew manning a block facing the other way. He bombed and killed them. Farther on was a third gun. Mactier scrambled out to avoid wire in the trench, and was running to attack this gun when a fourth one near by killed him. But his action had overcome the obstacle.⁸⁸ Lieut. Dixon led on the patrol capturing 40 Germans whom Mactier had subdued. Another 40 near Allan's post broke over the open and were chased with heavy fire. The companies filed to Gottlieb Trench just as the barrage fell on Mont St. Quentin.

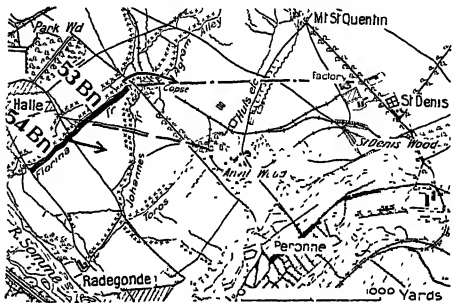
The 14th Brigade also, after filing across the Tortille on a tree-trunk that served as a bridge, had reached Florina Trench, only just in time. It attacked with two bat-
14th Brigade, talions, 54th and 53rd—the 54th on the right
Anvil Wood to clear the area between Péronne and the river, and then, if not too strongly opposed, take Péronne; the 53rd on the left to advance east between the Mount and Péronne and thence (by exploitation) on to the hill east of Péronne. The 56th would follow the 53rd and then pass round the east of Péronne to the hill south of the Cologne River. It was an immense task, and the attack was an hour too late to suit Australians.

But just then misty drizzling rain began, a most helpful circumstance on this battlefield which, though cratered in parts, was now grass-covered. The brigade was in excellent fettle, having been in no serious fight for over a month,⁸⁹ and the troops being eager to share in the Australian successes. Maj. Murray, of the left front company of the 53rd, had learnt from the 23rd that there were Germans in the northern end of Florina Trench. The copse there also was strongly held and in front of it ran thick wire. Murray arranged that one platoon should first try to clear a passage with wire cutters. It was driven back with heavy loss, but then crossed the road northwards and forced

⁸⁸ He was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

⁸⁹ Since Aug. 25 it had, by the preference of its commander, been reserved for a full dress attack.

its way into Agram Alley, Lieut. Eastment,⁹⁰ his face covered with blood, and one of his men heaving aside the "knife rests" of the entanglement. A dozen Germans were shot and two machine-guns captured, and by 6.25 Murray was able to pass most of the two northern companies through this trench and thence in extended order over the open north-east of the Albert-Ham railway. Meanwhile to the right Capt. Evers⁹¹ company had been



stopped by machine-guns firing from Johannes Trench behind two unbroken belts of wire. But the support company crawled up and Evers arranged to give covering fire while Lieut. W. Smith,⁹² leading a platoon of the supports, dashed for a gap in the wire where the Péronne road ran through. There followed a fire fight in which the Lewis gunners stood up and sprayed their bullets over the top of the wire. Evers was wounded and had only one of his officers remaining;⁹³ but Lieut. Smith and his men got through and cleared the trench. The water in the German machine-guns was still boiling when the leader of the support company, Capt. W. E. Smith⁹⁴ (who now took charge) reached them with the rest of his men. To the left thirty Germans with two machine-guns were still firing at the other half of the battalion. Lieut. Smith and his men at once rushed them from the rear and they surrendered.⁹⁵

The Germans at the copse had now fled or surrendered.

⁹⁰ Lt. S. R. Eastment; 53rd Bn. Shop assistant; of Bathurst, N.S.W.; b. Bathurst, 15 May 1895.

⁹¹ Maj. S. W. Evers, M.C.; 53rd Bn. Clerk; of Manly, N.S.W.; b. Stanmore, N.S.W., 12 June 1895.

⁹² Lt. W. Smith; 53rd Bn. Building contractor; of Chatswood, N.S.W.; b. Long Clawson, Leicester, Eng., 11 Nov. 1889. A photograph of the wire is given in *Vol. XII, plate 541*.

⁹³ Lt. G. A. Young (Nausori, Fiji). Lt. W. L. Lamerton (Bathurst, N.S.W.) was killed and Lt. L. J. Toffer (Sydney) wounded.

⁹⁴ Brig. W. E. Smith, M.C.; 53rd Bn. Engineer; of Ashfield, N.S.W.; b. Newtown, N.S.W., 30 Mar. 1895.

⁹⁵ His batman, Pte. E. W. Willis (Redfern, N.S.W.), was killed in the rush, and immediately afterwards Smith was hit by a machine-gun in a third post, apparently in *Toros Trench*.

The right went on under Capt. Smith into Anvil Wood. At the north-west edge of the wood a German field-gun fired point blank but a Newcastle youngster, Pte. Currey,⁹⁶ sprayed it with his Lewis gun and then rushed and killed the crew.⁹⁷

The 53rd had met part of the force which, according to the history of the 28th R.I.R., was just advancing together with the 38th Divn. to retake Halle and the Somme line. It comprised the 28th R.I.R., II/161st I.R., and accompanying field-guns.

The right battalion also—the 54th—unexpectedly found its way barred by dense barbed-wire in front of the first German trench. But the men ran to the wire, the Lewis gunners placing their guns on the knife rests and blazing at the Germans thirty yards away while others tore up the pickets and crawled under the wire. At the sight of this determination the Germans fled. At the second trench machine-guns that threatened to stop the right and left were forthwith stalked by Corpls. Hall⁹⁸ and Buckley⁹⁹ respectively.¹⁰⁰ From there onwards advancing at a half run, as fast as it could go, the right chased the Germans towards Péronne shooting from the shoulder and giving them no time to stop until the Australian barrage, still falling on Radegonde, made a pause necessary. The left sweeping through part of Anvil Wood found 200 fugitives being formed up by a German battalion commander to march to Péronne. Cornered and ordered to surrender he bade his men drop their rifles and was astonished to find two privates, Patterson and Brown, advancing to take the surrender and marching him and his men to the rear.¹

The two right companies of the 53rd cleared the left of the wood taking many prisoners and machine-guns and two field-guns; but the two companies north of the wood received

⁹⁶ Pte. W. M. Currey, V.C. (No. 1584A; 53rd Bn.). Wire worker; of Leichhardt and Wallsend, N.S.W.; b. Wallsend, 19 Sep. 1895. (In 1941 he was elected a Member of the Legislative Assembly of N.S.W.).

⁹⁷ Later, beyond the wood and cemetery, he crept round and captured a machine-gun post holding up the left. He received the Victoria Cross.

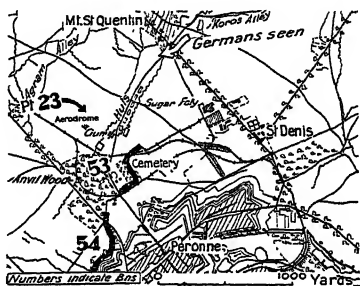
⁹⁸ Sgt. A. C. Hall, V.C. (No. 2631; 54th Bn.). Station overseer; of Nyngan, N.S.W.; b. Granville, N.S.W., 11 Aug. 1896.

⁹⁹ Cpl. A. H. Buckley, V.C. (No. 1876; 54th Bn.). Farmer; of "Homebush", Armatree, N.S.W.; b. Warren, N.S.W., 22 July 1891. Killed in action, 1 Sep. 1918.

¹⁰⁰ Hall, son of a Nyngan pastoralist and a good shot at kangaroo, worked through the entanglement, shot 4 men, and captured 15 and 2 machine-guns; Buckley with one companion rushed a post capturing 22 men and 2 guns. For this and their later work each was awarded the Victoria Cross.

¹ He knew, of course, that others were supporting them. He afterwards spoke with admiration of his captors.

machine-gun fire from Mont St. Quentin. The 23rd had been seen advancing but it was evident the Mount had not been captured. The advancing Lewis gunners of the 53rd constantly fired to their left rear at Germans seen through the drizzle moving at the southern corner of the village. Among the dumps along the road from the Mount to Anvil Wood was a German field-gun. A signaller, Pte. Crank,² and company storeman, L.-Corpl. Weatherby,³ swung it round, fired shell after shell into these Germans, and then rejoined their company.



The 53rd had now emerged upon a wide panorama—several hundred yards of grass gently sloping down to the moat and ramparts of Péronne, with the wooded hills ringing the background. From the woods field-guns fired direct, and from the factories and scrub of St. Denis, on the avenue between Péronne and the Mount, machine-guns rattled. The 53rd was pinned by this fire to the edge of the cemetery that bordered the east of the wood; the left was bent back along the old Albert-Ham railway.⁴ At the dumps north-east of the wood there had arrived the right half of the 23rd with hardly an officer left. Lieut. Holland's company of that battalion followed by Capt. Moss's on passing the 5th Brigade's posts in Agram Alley had been faced by an aerodrome swept by intense fire from the whole semicircle ahead. Half of Holland's company was hit within fifteen minutes. Moss's lost every officer.⁵ The troops, forced to earth, saw Germans advancing towards them across the aerodrome, and opening fire drove these Germans back.

² L.-Sgt. R. Crank, D.C.M. (No. 2153; 53rd Bn.). Farmer; of Exeter, N.S.W.; b. Manchester, Eng., 13 Feb. 1894.

³ L.-Cpl. C. J. Weatherby, D.C.M. (No. 2263; 53rd Bn.). Mechanic; of Yass, N.S.W.; b. Yass, 12 Aug. 1898.

⁴ This passed north of the cemetery. A military line had been built on a better grade south of the cemetery.

⁵ Moss himself and Lts. W. R. F. Love (Moonee Ponds, Vic.) and G. W. Griffin (Hughesdale, Vic.) were wounded; Lt. W. J. Clayton (Clifton Hill, Vic.) killed. Lt. A. F. H. Gabriel (Ballarat, Vic.) of Holland's company was wounded.

The Germans were the right of the 28th R.I.R. (185th Divn.) or left of the 95th I.R. (38th Divn.) attempting their counter-attack at dawn.

Holland then tried to join part of his brigade which he could see working through trenches towards the southern corner of the Mount, but finding the open ground impassable he turned right, gathered some of the 23rd along the railway, and returned through the 14th Brigade to Gottlieb Trench where he learnt what had happened to the left.

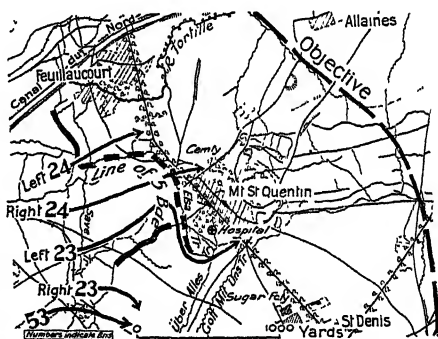
The left of the 23rd, advancing from Gottlieb, had also met intense fire from the right. In addition machine-guns on the

Mount were hitting the troops as they hurried to Elsa Trench which, to their surprise, they

found still held by a weary remnant of the 17th, 19th and 20th, and crowded with their dead. Pushing on thence through the broken wall into the enclosure south of the

Bapaume road the 23rd found the two tracks through the trees covered by machine-guns in the old hospital huts to the right. Lieuts. Jenkins, Addison,⁶ and Short, however, worked their men to the right, through Elsa and Über Alles Trenches to the road, but fire from Gott Mit Uns and from the direction of the Sugar Factory as well as from the Mount made them withdraw to Elsa Trench.

At the start the left battalion, 24th, could not see the 23rd through the drizzle, but the inner flanks had picked each other up before reaching Elsa Trench. The covering bombardment on this flank was very light⁷ and the troops were under heavy machine-gun fire from the village and all parts of the summit. Lieut. Sedgwick⁸ and his men crossed the road at the



⁶ Capt. L. G. Addison, M.C.; 23rd Bn. Accountant; of Elsternwick, Vic.; b. Glenelg, S.A., 26 May 1889.

⁷ Probably the orders were late; also the 16th R.H.A. Bde. when moving up had been stopped by order at Feuillères.

⁸ Lt. A. V. Sedgwick; 24th Bn. Clerk; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 27 Apr. 1893.



40. SCENE OF THE 14TH BRIGADE'S ATTACK, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1918

The 23rd Battalion had also attacked here on the previous day. In the foreground are the Somme and the church of Ste. Radegonde. Above can be seen Johannes Trench and Toros Alley with their wire-entanglements (showing as dark streaks). Above Anvil Wood were the aerodrome and woods where Über Alles and Gott Mit Uns trenches lay. Up the extreme left runs part of Florina Trench and above it Agram and Galatz Alleys leading to the foot of Mont St. Quentin. Péronne lies outside the picture to the right of Anvil Wood.

Photo. taken on 29th September, 1918 by No. 3 Sqn., A.F.C.

To face p. 840.



41. PART OF THE AFTERNOON ATTACK ON MONT ST. QUENTIN, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1918

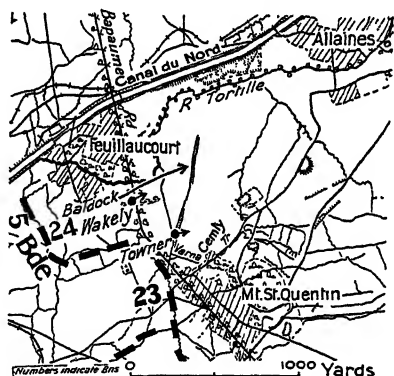
A company of the 21st Battalion leaving Elsa Trench. (A photograph of the attack from there over the open is given in *Plate 539, Vol. XII.*)

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo No. E3139.

To face p. 841.

northern end of the village, killed or captured a German post shooting at them from Varna Trench, cleared the cemetery, and were going up the trench beyond when Lieut. McCarty⁹ came with word that the 23rd had been stopped at the walled enclosure. As no one appeared on his left either, Sedgwick withdrew to Varna Trench, and, when the Germans enfiladed this, withdrew again till he saw on his left two Australian machine-guns firing steadily from a sunken road 150 yards forward of the Bapaume road. They had pressed on with the right of the 24th though their officer, Lieut. Towner,¹⁰ 7th Machine Gun Company, and five of his men were wounded.¹¹

The left of the 24th seized Feuillaucourt and the Bapaume road as soon as the bombardment lifted there,¹² the first wave then passing on to the Tortille streamlet. Unexpectedly the opposition came from the left, where it was believed the 3rd Division would already have advanced.¹³ Fire from the main bridge at Feuillaucourt and later from a trestle bridge occasionally stopped that flank of the 24th, but each time Corpl. Cooke¹⁴ suppressed it with his Lewis gun and the attack moved on. The Germans on the other flank, at the Mount, were then occupied with Sedgwick; but presently, when he had been driven back, the enemy in Varna Trench and the big quarry beyond turned such fire on to the flats that the Vic-



⁹ Lt. P. T. McCarty; 24th Bn. Blacksmith; of Buninyong, Vic.; b. Buninyong, 1892. Killed in action, 1 Sep. 1918.

¹⁰ Maj. E. T. Towner, V.C., M.C.; 7th M.G. Coy. Grazier; of Barcoo, Q'land; b. Glencoe Station, Blackall, Q'land, 19 Apr. 1890.

¹¹ On reaching the Mount they cut off and captured 30 Germans. Towner was hit on the head while pulling one of his machine-guns into shelter, but carried on.

¹² They found some Australian wounded in McDonald's old headquarters at the culvert. The Germans had treated them well and told them their friends would recapture them. In Feuillaucourt Sgt. Inskip and his post of the 20th rejoined, having lain low during the night.

¹³ Originally the 3rd Div.'s attack was to have started earlier.

¹⁴ Cpl. J. W. Cooke, M.M. (No. 5319; 24th Bn.). Farm labourer; of Warrnambool, Vic.; b. Lake Boga, 23 Sep. 1896.

torians crossing the Tortille could only dribble from shell-hole to shell-hole. The left support company (Lieut. Baldock's)¹⁵ reaching Feuillaucourt had for a moment been stopped by a machine-gun missed by the first wave; but as the troops worked forward the Germans lining the road bank suddenly dived for their dugouts and were easily captured.¹⁶ Baldock could see none of the first wave ahead until, reaching the Tortille, he detected some figures in front, behind a bank. With a few men rushing from crater to crater he reached it followed gradually by most of his company.

Up in the sunken road Towner of the machine-guns, Sedgwick, Capt. Bowden,¹⁷ Lieut. Gow, and also Lieut. Jenkins who came round from the 23rd in Elsa Trench, decided that the German positions must be bombarded before the brigade could push on. Two neighbouring machine-guns of the 7th Company on the main road had a direct telephone to Lieut.-Col. James of the 24th and Towner and Sedgwick told him the position.¹⁸ It was then 7 a.m.

The attack on Mont St. Quentin this morning had been met by the 94th I.R. mixed with a few of the Alexander Regt., together with the III/96th as local garrison. On their left were the 95th, with II/96th in support, and on their right the I/96th had just lined the bank of the road to Feuillaucourt. Farther back there had been brought up behind the 2nd Guard Divn. the three regiments of the 243rd Divn.; but the comfort brought by the news of this to the Germans was discounted when it was found that the *regiments* averaged 350 strong.

The Australian bombardment apparently smothered any preparations by the 38th Divn. for the intended counter-attack. The I/96th and remnants of Alexander withdrew from the Bapaume road when out-flanked at Feuillaucourt. After Mont St. Quentin was cleared, the 94th there was reinforced by a company of the II/96th.

About 9 o'clock something caused a withdrawal among the 95th I.R. on the other slope, between the Mount and Péronne. Headquarters of the 94th I.R. happened at the same time to be leaving the Mount, and panic was spread by all these troops crowding back along the saps. The II/96th was rushed into the sector and re-formed the line between the Mount and Sugar Factory.

¹⁵ Lt. E. S. Baldock, M.C.; 24th Bn. Station overseer; of Melbourne, b. Bombay, 1897.

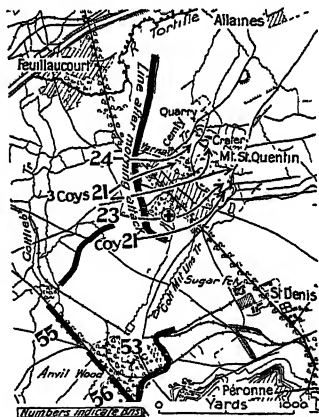
¹⁶ Later, as the line reached them they stood up, dropped their arms, and walked through towards the Australian lines. They had been taken also in flank by the 3rd Div. (see p. 846, footnote 35). Some of the Germans captured here may have escaped later.

¹⁷ Maj. G. J. Bowden, M.C.; 24th Bn. Commission agent; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Cheshunt, Vic., 17 Mar. 1888.

¹⁸ Towner had sent his runner Pte. G. Watson (Brisbane) with a message for James. Later he went himself and found Watson wounded. The two machine-guns were under Sgt. C. F. Wakely (Millaa-Millaa, N. Q'land).

Meanwhile Col. James and his three colleagues, hearing of the situation, arranged with the brigadier for the Mount and other positions to be bombarded intermittently by all calibres till 1 p.m. and then intensely till 1.30 when the brigade would again attack.¹⁹ As the 23rd had now only 120 rifles, two companies of the 21st closely followed by a third would attack through the north and centre of the village, while the 23rd went through the south. The 24th would advance from its present front north of the Mount.

The 21st came under hot fire at 11.30 advancing to Elsa Trench,²⁰ but eventually reached it through Agram Alley. The British bombardment was most effective. When it lengthened, the infantry advancing met comparatively little fire until they had passed the village and the wood beyond, from which snipers and machine-gunners ran back.²¹ Near the far side of the wood fire became severe, clipping the leaves, and men fell. On the left the emerging 21st saw that their flank platoons, working along Varna Trench, with Sedgwick's party of the 24th, were closely engaged with German machine-gunners ahead. After dislodging or capturing five or six machine-guns this flank was stopped in front of a huge crater 100 yards beyond the wood. From behind its edge stick-bombs were coming and machine-guns fired. A rush by Sergt. Wignall's²² platoon (21st) failed, but Sergt. Lowerson,²³ realising this to be the centre of resistance, urged the survivors



¹⁹ The 12th Bty. A.F.A. was attached to the 6th Bde., and observers of the 16th R.H.A. Bde. were now in the front line.

²⁰ Where the line west of the village lay. Lt. N. R. Holt (Moonee Ponds, Vic.) was killed there. Just after the 21st crossed the railway a big mine blew up the track.

²¹ A wounded Australian lying on a stretcher since the day before called to the troops as they passed. Light machine-guns in Gott Mit Uns Trench also were abandoned. Photographs of this attack are shown in *Vol. XII, plates 537-540*. Capt. Wilkins hoped to get a snapshot of a German machine-gunner at work, but failed.

²² Sgt. T. H. Wignall (No. 2423; 21st Bn.). Landscape gardener; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Ormskirk, Lancs., Eng., 27 Jan. 1891.

²³ Sgt. A. D. Lowerson, V.C. (No. 2358; 21st Bn.). Labourer; of Myrtleford, Vic.; b. Myrtleford, 2 Aug. 1896.

to creep up and rush the crater. He himself led and reaching the edge threw bomb after bomb into the crowded enemy. He was wounded, but Sergt. Smith²⁴ and others came up and the crater was captured.²⁵ Farther south the troops emerging from the wood had to clear by several rushes the German trenches just beyond it. Reaching Koros Alley Lieut. Sennitt²⁶ was killed. Towner, pushing forward, placed his machine-guns on a mound with a fine command.²⁷ Those Germans who escaped death or capture fled over the crest down the southern slope to the Aizecourt road, and crowded Darmstadt Trench. Sullivan's company of the 21st, from support, completed the line around the southern edge of the village, and at his suggestion a company of the reserve battalion (22nd) was sent to Gott Mit Uns Trench behind the right flank.

German records show that in the crater were headquarters of the I/96th I.R. and its reserve company. The broken 94th and 96th streamed to the rear along the communication trenches. The staffs of the 96th and the I/94th jumping in where these saps passed their headquarters at the farm 500 yards east of the wood, rallied them there, and the staff of the 94th I.R. similarly formed another line 400 yards back. But the German artillery forthwith bombarded these lines and organisation was again blown to the winds. The brave leader of the I/94th, Prince Solms, was killed, but by 6 p.m. a line of remnants had been collected.²⁸

On the northern slope of Mont St. Quentin parties of the 21st and 24th under Sergt. Dart²⁹ worked along Plevna Trench to Tortille Trench, but this was blocked with machine-guns behind wire barricades, in tackling which Lieut. Cope³⁰ (21st)

²⁴ L.-Sgt. H. F. Smith (No. 2487; 21st Bn.). Labourer; of Beaufort, Vic.; b. Talbot, Vic., 1896.

²⁵ Lowerson received the Victoria Cross. Pte. Roy Smerdon (Murrayville, Vic.) who twice suppressed machine-guns in this area by standing up to fire his Lewis gun, Pte. Frank Roberts (Hawthorn, Vic.), Pte. A. E. Kelly (Ballarat, Vic.)—all three being killed—and Sgt. V. J. Edwards (Launceston, Tas.) and Pte. J. Castle (Moonee Ponds, Vic.) were among those prominent in this spirited affair.

Trench-mortars were sent for, but the crater was taken before they could open, and their first shells wounded Sgt. Smith. In this week's fighting great difficulty was found in getting up light trench-mortars and their ammunition; men were short, distances long, and mules (when used on Sep. 2) were too much exposed to fire. The medium trench-mortar batteries of the 3rd Div. formed a battery of 12 captured light *minenwerfer*; but for these, too, the advance proved too fast.

²⁶ Lt. A. J. Sennitt; 21st Bn. Clerk; of Middle Park, Vic.; b. North Melbourne, 16 Nov. 1897. Killed in action, 1 Sep. 1918.

²⁷ His outstanding leadership throughout brought him a well merited Victoria Cross.

²⁸ From north to south the Alexander Regt., 10th, 9th, and 11th Coys. 96th I.R.; II/96th I.R.

²⁹ Sgt. E. J. R. Dart, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 2609; 24th Bn.). Farmer; of Nhill, Vic.; b. Woorak West, Vic., 7 Apr. 1891.

³⁰ Lt. A. L. Cope; 21st Bn. Farmer, of Strathmerton, Vic.; b. Strathmerton, 1890. Killed in action, 1 Sep. 1918.

was killed. Tortille and Darmstadt Trenches were the objective, but on the advice of two company commanders on the spot³¹ the advance was temporarily stopped.

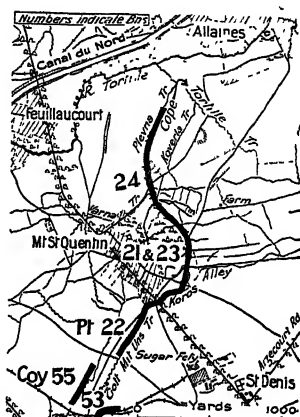
Here too, says the history of the Alexander Regt., the Germans—I/96th and a remnant of the Guard—were shelled by their own artillery. The front was pressed back on the supports (122nd Fus. Regt., 243rd Divn.) and both then fell back to Allaines and Haut Allaines. "One enemy battery," says the history of the Alexander Regt., "had to stand damnably close, and constantly blazed at us."³²

The 21st Battalion was warned to be ready to push on. Then came a cancelling order; the 7th Brigade, instead, would go through at dawn.

Mont St. Quentin had now been firmly captured. North of the Canal the thrust had been supported this day by the 11th Brigade (3rd Divn.). It was to seize the slopes west of the Canal du Nord as far as the old Scutari-Broussa trench-line from Allaines to a mile south-east of Bouchavesnes. The exhausted 10th and 9th Brigades had been relieved by the 11th, but the artillery moving

**3rd Division,
September 1**

up to the western slope of Cléry ridge was so worn out with continuous firing, changing position, or ammunition carrying, that sleeping men fell from limbers as they drove. The infantry start-line was to be the Bapaume road, but as this had not been gained on the right, the 43rd (S.A.) Battalion there had to advance far behind its barrage, which started 300 yards east of the road. Moreover the final decision making zero hour 5.30 was too late to reach the companies; and as no Australian barrage fell at 5 a.m.³³ the right-centre company of the 43rd, lying out

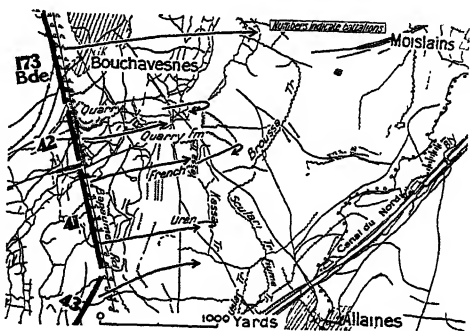


³¹ Lt. Gawler on the left and Capt. Sullivan (of the "Brewery" company) on the right. Sullivan made a valuable reconnaissance all round the Mount.

³² A spirited account of how the Australians "apparently proof against our shots" had enveloped the 1st Coy. is given in the regimental history p. 518.

³³ Originally zero was to have been 5 a.m. for 2nd and 3rd Divs.; eventually it was 6 a.m. for 5th and 2nd, and 5.30 for 3rd Div. and III Corps.

the teams of one and captured five guns; the others pluckily galloped clear. But the pause had allowed the Germans to rally in Scutari and Broussa Trenches. For the 41st to work down hill to this line and break through was an impossible task. Reaching a knuckle beyond the gully the left company was shot at direct by batteries on the Tortille flats and machine-guns in copses on the flanks. Capt. French had been wounded and with great difficulty the company fell back to Yassa Trench. The southern company met the fiercest fire ever experienced by the 41st; Capt. Uren was killed and the advance stopped.³⁷ The 41st had lost 5 officers and over 100 men but had taken some 200 prisoners.



The left battalion, 42nd (Q'land), which in the exploitation stage was to form a flank facing northwards, was given only a 500 yards' front.³⁸ Its barrage was thin, but the German garrison of the Quarry Farm area, 80 men and 8 machine-guns, quickly gave in when outflanked on the south and bombarded by rifle-grenades.³⁹ The 42nd's support company pushed through to exploit, but withdrew when the 41st did. Farther north a very worn brigade (173rd) of the 58th Division, attacking on a very narrow front (400 yards) with a dense barrage, reached its second objective. This lay on the plateau screened from the fire sweeping the eastern slopes, and the 58th dug in there half a mile ahead of the Australian flank.

The German troops north of the Canal were the Augusta Guard Regt. (with part of III/Alexander); the III/Franz Guard Regt. at Quarry Farm; and the 232nd Divn. at Bouchavesnes. The Augusta, facing the

³⁷ Lts. P. R. Rigg (Cairns, Q'land) and J. T. Mitchell (Waratah, N.S.W.) were killed there. Early reports indicated that the second objective had been taken. Accurate news was quickly sent from the front by Lt. MacGibbon, the intelligence officer, but had not reached Br.-Gen. Cannan even by dusk.

³⁸ Capt. Foxworthy's company of the 44th was lent to it. (Foxworthy, who died on 14 Jan. 1936 belonged to Fremantle, W.A.)

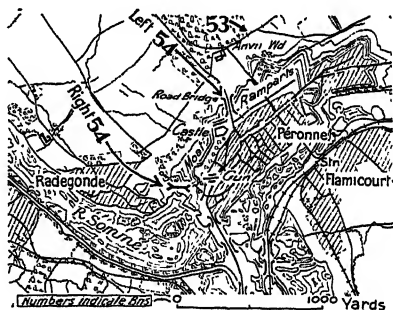
³⁹ Lt.-Col. Woolcock placed his command post there.

43rd and 41st was driven back on Scutari Trench, held near Allaines by the counter-attack regiment, the 478th, whose history says that the Australians all day tried vainly to penetrate its line by patrolling. The Franz Regt., facing the 41st and 42nd, was similarly driven back on the 479th, one of whose companies faced south and fired on Australians thrusting into the gullies there. The Guards' batteries were attacked. The front was finally held by a mixture of these troops.⁴⁰ A counter-attack was ordered by the 2nd Guards Divn. but was not launched.

The failure of the 3rd Division to reach its objective this day was a serious matter; for it was from this line (Scutari-Broussa-Sinope-Angora Trenches) that the ex-yeomanry from Palestine, who would relieve the 58th Division and most of the 3rd that night, were intended to attack. A report was sent by the 3rd Division at 4 p.m.,⁴¹ but apparently was too late to permit a readjustment of the III Corps arrangements.

This narrative left the 14th Brigade with the 53rd Battalion stopped at the cemetery by Anvil Wood looking down the slope to Péronne and St. Denis, while west of the wood the 54th had raced the Germans to Péronne. The town was surrounded by low grassy ramparts in front of which lay the watery moat crossed in front of the 54th by two bridges—that carrying the Cléry road into Péronne, and, far to the right, a wooden footbridge. As the 54th came up piecemeal a private, R. S. Scobie,⁴² Corpl. Hall, and others chased several Germans to the Cléry road bridge. As the Germans disappeared across it the bridge blew up. But the footbridge half a mile south was unbroken and the foremost Australians in that region, panting up from Radegonde, went down to it. The right company commander, Lieut. McArthur, was examin-

**14th Brigade,
Péronne,
September 1**



⁴⁰ The 479th I.R. had under it parts of the 445th, 447th, and Franz Regt. and Engr. Coys. 346 and 356.

⁴¹ It was still thought that Scutari and Uskar Trenches had been taken.

⁴² Pte. R. S. Scobie, D.C.M. (No. 3719; 54th Bn.). Engineering apprentice; of Newcastle, N.S.W.; b. West Maitland, N.S.W., 17 Jan. 1900.

ing it when a machine-gun, high on the battlements of the old castle, killed him and then Corpl. Buckley⁴³ and two other men. At 6.45 Lieut. Adams⁴⁴ sent word that the company was stopped. While it waited, reorganising behind the bushes fringing the moat, Lieut. Holder⁴⁵ was killed by a field-gun firing from between the houses ahead.

The Germans who fled to Péronne were the left of the 28th R.I.R. and the remnant of the 14th Bav. Divn. The defence of Péronne and Flamicourt had on Aug. 30 been entrusted to the 65th I.R. (185th Divn.). Its companies now averaged about 50 rifles strong, and it held Péronne with the I Bn., Flamicourt with the II. The line of the I Bn. faced generally across the Somme, the 1st Coy. and some machine-guns being with the 4th Bav. I.R. in Radegonde, the 2nd, with the 2nd M.G. Coy. and two field-guns of the 6/185th F.A.R. on the ramparts and castle walls at the west end of Péronne, the 4th guarding the southern bridges and the 3rd with battalion headquarters at the Town Hall. On the ramparts north and west of the town were the machine-guns of the 3rd Company, 67th M.G.S.S.A.

The ramparts therefore should have been well defended. But while the right of the 54th waited, Corpl. Hall at the main bridge reported that there were no signs of organised defence there. The moat was 6 feet deep but could easily be crossed on planks and other débris beneath the bridge. Capt. Downing in charge of the forward troops ordered the left to cross and, with Lieut. Ing,⁴⁶ 14th Machine Gun Company leading, section after section filed into Péronne.⁴⁷ Downing at once sent Lieut. Small⁴⁸ to clear the Germans opposing the right company. They were fired on by a large party on the castle walls but a burst of Lewis gun fire caused these to surrender and the rest were captured from the rear. Within twenty minutes the right company was crossing by the wooden footbridge and both worked through the town. A few shots came from upper windows but most of the enemy was in cellars.⁴⁹ The right

⁴³ The same who was posthumously given the Victoria Cross (*see p. 838*).

⁴⁴ Lt. J. Adams, M.C.; 54th Bn. Clerk; of Southwark, London and Sydney; b. Coombe Flove, Somerset, Eng., 26 Sep. 1890.

⁴⁵ Lt. F. P. Holder; 54th Bn. Bookseller; of Randwick, N.S.W.; b. Waverley, N.S.W., 13 Nov. 1893. Killed in action, 1 Sep. 1918.

⁴⁶ Lt. G. L. Ing; 14th M.G. Coy. Grocer; of Perth, W.A.; b. Perth, 9 Mar. 1893.

⁴⁷ Behind them the 14th Fld. Coy. began to repair the bridge.

⁴⁸ Capt. C. J. Small, V.D.; 54th Bn. Boot trade operator; of Oatley, N.S.W.; b. Redfern, N.S.W., 17 Oct. 1890.

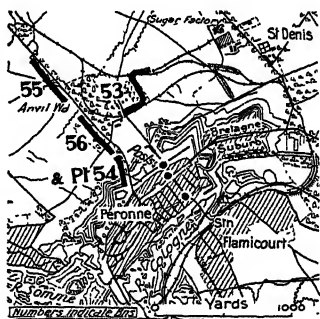
⁴⁹ Lt. C. W. Harvey and his company captured about 100, most of whom had run away from the earlier attack and were sitting waiting to be taken. Sgt. W. G. Bartier (Newcastle, N.S.W.) found an officer and 20 men sitting at coffee. The officer asked if he could finish his drink and invited Bartier to join him. Bartier's men drank the rest.

company, now under Lieut. Agnew,⁵⁰ turned south towards the main Amiens road bridge when, unexpectedly, it met some of the 15th Brigade.

The rest of the 54th worked south-east across the town to the Cologne river beyond which lay Flamicourt and the railway station. A German officer was marching a large body in fours through the railway yard when the Lewis and Vickers guns from across the lagoon scattered them. A field-gun at the station was silenced, but Australian patrols trying the causeway to Flamicourt were stopped by machine-guns which could fire from Flamicourt into the centre of Péronne.⁵¹

The history of the 65th I.R. says that the Australians came along the Cléry road so mingled with fugitives of German regiments that the heavy machine-guns on the ramparts there could not safely fire. The explosion at the bridge caused panic in which (though the historian does not say so) the machine-gunners evidently deserted their posts. The commander of the I/65th and, at the last minute, 20 men under two officers escaped across the causeway to the station.

By 7.30 there remained to be captured only the Bretagne suburb, the detached north-eastern quarter of the old fortress-town, connected by a bridge. Corpl. Hall with five men,⁵² sent by Downing to find the 53rd, went through it, more interested in taking prisoners, till from the last house in the street he saw twenty Germans, lining the northern rampart. From the windows his men, at a signal, shot into their backs. They surrendered with others from dugouts, making 70 in all. Machine-guns outside the town now caused Hall to withdraw, and his officers, having by then only 120 men for holding a mile of front decided not to occupy Bretagne suburb till the 56th advanced north of the town—a truly tragic decision. Posts were placed along the street cross-



⁵⁰ Lt. W. L. Agnew; 54th Bn. Pastoralist; of Sydney; b. Belfast, Ire., 1 Aug. 1881.

⁵¹ Capt. J. A. S. Mitchell (Forbes, N.S.W.) was hit at a corner there.

⁵² Including Ptes. T. Assender (Ganmain, N.S.W. and Richmond, Vic.) who was killed there, and W. Madden (Cessnock, N.S.W.). Pte. C. Melrose (Gundagai, N.S.W.) with a stretcher also tacked himself to the party.

ing the town at Flamicourt causeway, and the support companies withdrew leaving only 50 men in Péronne. At 10 o'clock Lieut.-Col. Marshall came round and checked the dispositions. Later Germans filtered back into the suburb.

German records (made available by courtesy of the *Reichsarchiv*) show that after the panic in Péronne the 185th Divn.'s troops were rallied in the woods north of Doingt. The division's chief of staff ordered the nearest battalion (the I/258th R.I.R.⁵³ at Bussu) first to St. Denis Wood, and from there (on himself finding the streets free of Australians) to the Bretagne suburb. The I/258th was 413 strong and was replaced in St. Denis Wood by the III/258th.

Never more than during these hours was there need for some strong representative of the 5th Division or 14th Brigade to judge and control the situation on the spot.

15th Brigade In the 6th Brigade the battalion commanders by sharing the same headquarters provided some control. In the 15th Elliott had his headquarters at Orme de Barleux on the heights west of the river looking down on the panorama south of Péronne. At 7.30 this morning, learning that the 14th Brigade was in Péronne, he hurried to headquarters of the 59th Battalion farther down the slope. "Have you heard?" he asked the commanders of the 58th and 59th. "Are your men across the river?" Both battalions must cross at once by any possible route.⁵⁴ "Damn it," he exclaimed. "I'll take them over myself"; and he made straight down hill in view of the enemy to the main road bridge. This had been reported impassable, the whole structure having collapsed, but Elliott clambered across a steel girder and stood on the ramparts. A machine-gun Flamicourt way fired at him but he took cover and signalled to a post of the 59th to come across to him. He then went back to hurry on the 59th and 58th.

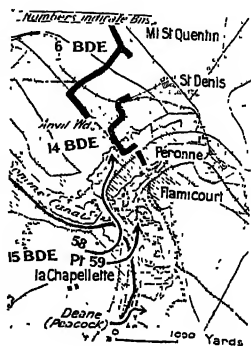
In my haste (he wrote) I trod on a loose beam and fell into the Canal . . . As the Canal was very deep with steep sides at that spot I had considerable difficulty scrambling out.⁵⁵

⁵³ Formerly of the 78th Res. Div. but now waiting to be drafted into the 185th. It had dug trenches between Bussu and Aizecourt.

⁵⁴ The brigade had been informed of the plans over night and ordered to seize any chance of taking the heights south of Flamicourt. A patrol under Lt. T. A. Slaughter (Wimmera district, Vic.) was across the railway bridge but the railway beyond was barred by machine-guns.

⁵⁵ At divisional headquarters Elliott was told that he had held up the communications of the 5th Div.: "All the signal stations were telling one another, 'Pompey's fallen in the Somme.'"

Coming up the hill the dripping brigadier met the two battalion commanders hurrying after him. He told Maj. Ferres (58th) to take his battalion through Péronne and attack Flamicourt from there while Lieut.-Col. Scanlan passed part of the 59th across the railway bridge to attack Flamicourt direct and Lieut. Deane's company of the 58th tried the crossing through the marshes near Chapellette where the footbridge should now be ready. Ferres, with his intelligence officer, Lieut. Moon, and two companies went through Péronne to the moat, and the officers reconnoitred the town. Their parties came under machine-gun fire; Bretagne suburb was then held by Germans, and, the causeway to Flamicourt being impassable, the company commanders⁵⁶ reported that farther advance could be made only after bombardment.



Two companies of the 59th with a patrol under Lieut. Pentreath leading crossed the railway bridge but, like the 7th Brigade before them, were stopped by a machine-gun post farther along the embankment. Pentreath and others were wounded and the companies recalled.

Deane's company went half a mile farther south where the engineers were completing the bridge of floats, and smoke shells were fired to help them.⁵⁷ Eventually the task of attacking was taken over by a small party of the 57th under Capt. Peacock who for two days had been covering the work on the bridge. The party crawled over it to the reedy island, beyond which were ten yards of water commanded by a German machine-gun. The leading man was just parting the farthest reeds to rush the gun when it opened hitting half the patrol.⁵⁸ Elliott, who had now taken over Scanlan's headquarters, where he was in his glory, overlooking Péronne though German

⁵⁶ Capt. R. B. Forsyth and Lt. W. Morrison. Had the 54th been holding Bretagne suburb it would have received this timely support.

⁵⁷ Without success as the wind was unfavourable.

⁵⁸ The leader, Pte. D. P. Bisset (Petrie, Q'land) was mortally wounded and died in German hands.

machine-guns could fire into the entrance,⁵⁹ tried to arrange for howitzers and trench-mortars to bombard the obstacles that had defeated these attacks preparatory to another attempt.

Meanwhile on the front of the 14th Brigade where troops should have been pushed on they were held back, and where they should have been held back they were pushed on. During the morning artillery observers having reported that the 6th Brigade was in Mont St. Quentin, the 53rd Battalion, then pinned to the slope north of Péronne, was ordered to advance at 1 p.m. to the hill a mile east of the town. The 56th would follow it, connect with the 54th, and pass around Péronne. The 53rd could see that the 6th Brigade was not then on the Mount—Germans were streaming to its southern edge. A company of the 55th brought up to guard the junction with the 2nd Division⁶⁰ was shooting at machine-guns there. The signaller, Pte. Crank, was hurriedly borrowed by Lieut. Waite⁶¹ from Maj. Murray at the railway to turn the captured field-gun on them again. Helped by Pte. Hopkins,⁶² and at great risk as they had no means of cleaning the gun, Crank poured in shot after shot, scattering the Germans. This time batteries at Bussu Wood burst shells all about the amateur gunners but failed to stop them till they had fired ninety rounds. Troops, then thought to be possibly Australians, had been seen at St. Denis, and the 54th were said to hold Péronne; the help of artillery, therefore, could not be asked. How the moat was to be crossed no one knew. Through his colonel, W. J. R. Cheeseman, Murray protested that an advance down that slope would be impossible⁶³ but he was eventually told that higher authorities insisted. He accordingly launched it at 5 p.m. The left of the 53rd in one thin line, with a company of the 55th in close support, made a dash from the upper railway and the cemetery to the lower railway 250 yards away. At once the area was swept by machine-guns from east and south. Germans

⁵⁹ Fortunately this was dark and spectators, themselves unseen, could survey the enemy's territory.

⁶⁰ The 56th and the rest of the 55th were about the Péronne-Cléry road near Anvil Wood.

⁶¹ Lt. W. Waite, M.C.: 53rd Bn. Farmer; of Coolah, N.S.W.; b. Tabilk, Vic., 27 Sep. 1888.

⁶² Pte. A. J. Hopkins, M.M. (No. 5380; 53rd Bn.). Farmer; of Goulburn, N.S.W.; b. Hay, N.S.W., 30 Nov. 1886. (Weatherby had been wounded.)

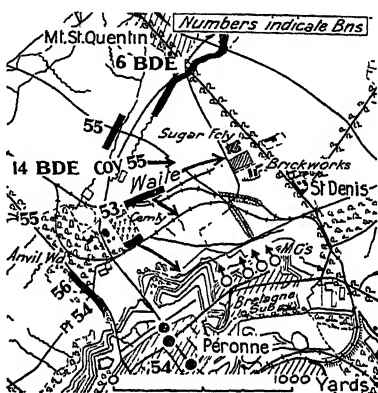
⁶³ The slope and ramparts are shown by photograph in *Vol. XII, plate 542*.

in Bretagne suburb set machine-guns again on the ramparts; others fired from windows.

The history of the 258th R.I.R. says: "We with our machine-guns were able to strike them well on the flank. The attack broke up with great loss to the English."

The right of the 53rd under Lieut. Bevan⁶⁴ from the cemetery reached the moat on the 54th's front and, crossing it on some loose timber, reported (through the 54th) the failure of the attack and the position of the line. On the left a party under Lieut. Waite and some of the 55th reached the Sugar Factory driving out the 95th I.R. Waite was isolated but collected a few men along the railway cuttings.

On the other flank the 56th had come up in readiness to the Cléry road bridge, but was withdrawn at dusk. The mistake of not taking all risks to clear Péronne had been dearly paid for. Monash and Blamey attributed both this and the delay in getting the brigade to its starting point to lack of driving power in Generals Hobbs and Stewart; and indeed such a task called rather for leaders like Elliott and Rosenthal. But that the main problem—where to place headquarters in this awkward angle—was not a simple one the sequel will show.

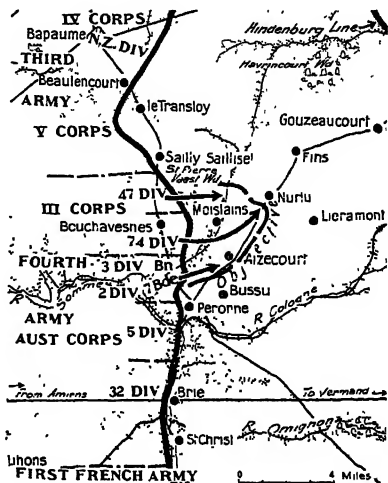


Monash had asked a great deal of his tired troops. He now intended to pause for a day while he advanced more guns, and then to put the 7th Brigade through on Mont St. Quentin; but General Godley of the III Corps had received approval of his plan to use the newly arrived 74th Division in striking while the Germans were shaken. He wished to attack next day and thrust deep,

**Plans for
September 2**

⁶⁴ Capt. W. V. Bevan, M.C.; 53rd Bn. School teacher; of Thirroul, N.S.W.; b. Bulli, N.S.W., 30 Apr. 1893.

and asked Monash to make a flank for him. General Blamey considered the project far too ambitious, but at the last moment Monash agreed though Blamey successfully urged that he should not pledge to support the III Corps flank beyond Aizecourt, two miles ahead of the 6th Brigade's front. Undoubtedly, as events showed, there was great advantage in striking quickly, but the arrangements of both Corps had to be rushed—a dangerous circumstance for a division new to the Western Front and attempting a very deep thrust. The 2nd Australian Division would form a flank for it and the 5th Division would complete the capture of its former objective, Péronne and the hills east and south of it.



It was 7.30 p.m. when General Rosenthal was called to Corps headquarters and given Monash's verbal order for the 7th Brigade to attack at dawn (5.30).⁶⁵ At 9.30 the orders were passed by Rosenthal and Hobbs to their infantry brigadiers and artillery commanders at conferences at 2nd Division and 8th Brigade headquarters respectively.⁶⁶ At 10.45 Brig.-Genl. Wisdom (7th Bde.) returned to his headquarters at Buscourt and gave his infantry and artillery commanders⁶⁷ verbal instructions as to the 7th Brigade's part. The attack through the 6th Brigade's front would be made by the 26th, 25th and 27th Battalions with the 28th closely supporting both flanks. Not enough guns were yet forward to provide a thick barrage, but the batteries, as before, would shell important targets ahead, lifting to farther ones at stated times. Each

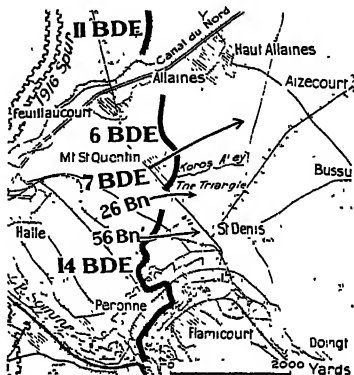
⁶⁵ The formal order was sent out at 11.6 p.m.

⁶⁶ A staff officer of the 2nd Div. was at the 5th Div.'s conference. Lt.-Col. J. H. Peck (G.S.O. 1, 5th Div.) had been replaced, owing to serious illness, by Lt.-Col. J. T. McColl.

⁶⁷ The C.R.A. of the 2nd Div. (Br.-Gen. Phillips) also was present.

battery shot along its own "lane." The battalions then in Prague, Florina, Gottlieb and Kholm Trenches had been ordered to breakfast⁶⁸ and be ready to move. Their commanders reached them at 2 and had just time to instruct the company commanders who then had to move at once, without explanation to the junior officers. The objective was peculiar—a flank extending two miles along the southern edge of Mont St. Quentin ridge to Aizecourt. Beyond that point the 74th Division, aiming at Nurlu, must provide its own protection.

The 14th Brigade, on the right of the 7th, again could not be ready before 6 a.m., and consequently Col. Robinson of the 26th (right of the 7th Bde.) arranged for one and a half companies of his right to start with the 14th Brigade, half an hour later than the rest of the 7th.⁶⁹



The 7th Brigade, which had turned in to sleep without expecting to attack, was aroused, breakfasted, and filed to its assembly line, a road near Elsa Trench. The 26th's centre company (Lieut. Monteith⁷⁰), really forming the right of the attack along the Mount, followed by half the support company, advanced at 5.30 over the southern shoulder of the hill. But here the triangle, bounded by the Bapaume and Aizecourt roads meeting in the valley and Koros Alley near the crest, was swept by

⁶⁸ It had to be a cold meal—dry bread, cold beef, cold tea.

⁶⁹ The rates for the advance of the "barrage" also differed. The 7th Bde. wanted a rate of 100 yards in 1½ minutes. But the rate of the 14th Bde. would be 100 yards in 3 minutes, and for III Corps 100 in 5. Gen. Wisdom therefore arranged for a rate of 100 in 3 for his right, 100 in 4 for the centre, 100 in 5 for the left. The artillery supporting the attacks was the same as on Sep. 1 except that the 16th R.H.A. Bde. had come up east of Cléry, and, the 3rd Div.'s front being gradually cut out, half its artillery (3rd A.F.A. and 14th Army Bdes.) would help the 2nd Div. by firing a barrage creeping through Allaines on the 2nd Div.'s left flank. For the first 15 minutes the 5th Div.'s barrage would be denser than before (3 rounds per field-gun per minute).

⁷⁰ Lt. R. H. Monteith; 26th Bn. Accountancy student; of Toowong, Q'land; b. Brisbane, 1891. Killed in action, 2 Sep. 1918.



42. A POST OF THE 54TH BATTALION IN PÉRONNE

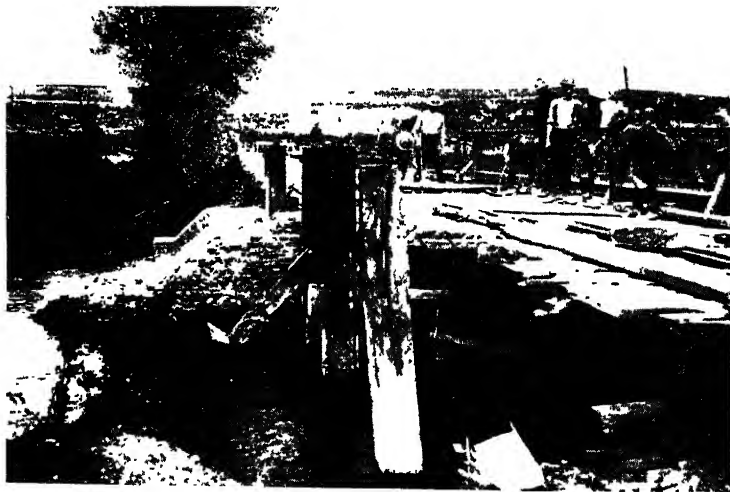
*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo No. E3183.
Taken on 2nd September, 1918.*



43. BRINGING IN WOUNDED, 1ST SEPTEMBER, 1918

Bearers of the 6th Field Ambulance working over exposed ground.

Aust War Memorial Official Photo. No. E3105.



44. REBUILDING A BRIDGE OVER THE SOMME SWAMPS NEAR CLÉRY

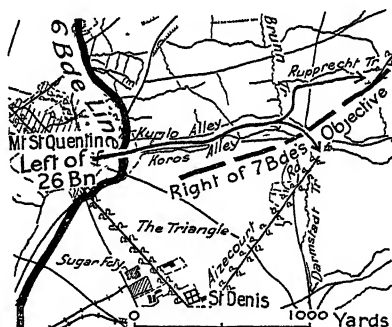
The men are engineers of the 9th Field Company.

Aust War Memorial Official Photo. No. E3143
Taken on 2nd September, 1918.

To face p. 857.

machine-gun fire such as the 7th Brigade had not experienced even at Pozières. Lieut. Major reached the Aizecourt road but Monteith and Lieut. Taylor⁷¹ were killed and Lieut. Suffolk⁷² wounded. The company and a half on the right, lying waiting for the 14th Brigade, were hit by the German bombardment answering the attack,⁷³ but at 6 o'clock they advanced to the Triangle amid the dust of their own barrage, only to be met by the same torrent of bullets. Lieut. Ibbott⁷⁴ and a few parties managed to reach banks or other cover where they lay pinned down till dusk. Maj. Woods (26th) was killed and Maj. Glyde⁷⁵ (28th) wounded.⁷⁶ Sooner or later the survivors fell back to Koros Alley where they were comparatively safe.

For, working through trenches beside the crest, the left company had made an astonishing advance. At the assembly, missing the companies on its right and coming under shell-fire, it had gone ahead to the Bapaume road; and from there at zero it dived straight into the two long communication trenches, Koros and Kurilo Alleys, which its own guns were still bombarding. Here two parties, forty men in all, under Lieuts. McHardie⁷⁷ and Lawson,⁷⁸ disappeared into the dust and smoke, passed their own barrage, and chased and overran the garrison. The Germans, caught in cross fire from one trench to the other, did not set up their machine-guns again. Lawson in Kurilo Alley was badly



⁷¹ Lt. P. Taylor, M.M.; 26th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Sydney; b. Wick, Caithness, Scotland, 5 Apr. 1886. Killed in action, 2 Sep. 1918.

⁷² Lt. W. H. Suffolk; 26th Bn. Master mariner; of Brisbane; b. Peckham, Eng., 16 July 1883.

⁷³ The companies of the 28th following the 26th had to wear their gas-masks.

⁷⁴ Lt. V. G. Ibbott, M.C.; 26th Bn. Clerk; of Ulverstone, Tas.; b. Colebrook, Tas., 13 Dec. 1891.

⁷⁵ Lt.-Col. E. G. Glyde; 28th Bn. Insurance inspector; of Perth, W.A.; b. Norwood, S.A., 6 Nov. 1882.

⁷⁶ Lt. N. S. Boyle (Morven, Q'land); also was mortally wounded this day.

⁷⁷ Lt. J. S. McHardie, M.C.; 26th Bn. Contractor; of Red Hill, Q'land; b. Mirani, Q'land, 26 Mar. 1896.

⁷⁸ Lt. O. J. Lawson, M.C.; 26th Bn. Farmer; of Brisbane; b. Bathurst, N.S.W., 25 Oct. 1896.

wounded but 1,000 yards of each trench was swiftly taken from an enemy armed with thirty machine-guns. Where the two saps were crossed by Brunn Trench the Queenslanders, now only 25 strong, divided, some probing south-east to the St. Denis-Aizecourt road near Darmstadt Trench, others north to Rupprecht Trench and then east to the same road 400 yards ahead. At this stage down Brunn Alley came thirty Germans, retiring before the 25th,⁷⁹ which had advanced when the barrage lifted. The 26th in Rupprecht Alley turned back and fought them.

The 25th had reached its tapes, after a very anxious approach, by 5.15. Its two front companies emerging from the Mont St. Quentin Wood on to the crest and northern slope met fire from a few posts, but easily swept round them and moved on until, approaching the true summit, Hill 115, the Queenslanders were met by fire described as "terrific." The main German line evidently crossed the ridge at Brunn Trench, with a very strong advanced post in cross trenches and a crater on the summit. The battalion had never before faced such fire. Its commander, Maj. Page, and Capt. Cross⁸⁰ of the support company were wounded. The strong-point was still 400 yards ahead. On the northern slope the left company was stopped in front of Brunn Trench by fire equally strong. On the lower ground by the Tortille the 27th Battalion followed by two companies of the 28th under Maj. Mitchell⁸¹ had easily overcome some resistance at the stream bed, and had passed its own thin barrage which advanced at the slow rate set by III Corps; but on reaching the mounds of Allaines it was met by enfilade fire, here, too, described as "staggering." Nine officers of the 27th were hit this day, mostly at this stage.⁸² The left company led by its N.C.O's worked through part of Allaines and Capt. Hosking, with the support company and remnants of others, through the south of Haut Allaines. Hosking then formed up his men south of that village facing up hill towards Brunn Trench.

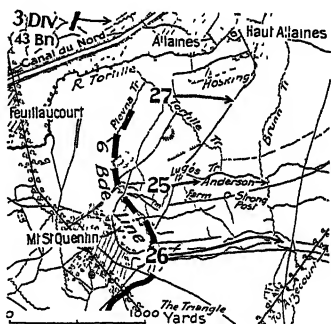
⁷⁹ Capt. Cooper at first mistook them for prisoners.

⁸⁰ Capt. H. Cross, M.C.; 25th Bn. Electrical engineer; of Brisbane; b. Hackford, Norfolk, Eng., 12 June 1890.

⁸¹ Col. A. Mitchell, D.S.O., V.D.; 13th L.H. Regt. Grazier; of Thoon, Vic.; b. Modewarre, Vic., 5 Mar. 1879. (He was commanding the 28th for experience.)

⁸² Lts. Lampard (27th) and E. Edmondson, of Kalgoorlie, W.A. (28th) were killed, and Maj. Julge and Lt. L. W. C. Leak, of Unley, S.A. (27th) wounded, the latter mortally. Lt. E. M. H. Farquharson, of Fremantle, W.A. (28th) received his fifth wound in the war.

The situation looked very dark. On the crest the 25th had tended to swing to the shelter of Lugos Trench, along the edge of the northern slope. Here a Mullumbimby lad, Sergt. Anderson,⁸³ of the leading company, Capt. Fletcher's,⁸⁴ on his own initiative with a small party and a Lewis gun, destroyed the German machine-gun post at the junction of Lugos and Brunn Trenches. This enabled the party to get into the alignment of the main German line and clear a large post fifty yards south. About then Anderson's brother,⁸⁵ a corporal, crawled out with a party in front of the strong advanced post on the summit. "I know you can't take it," said Capt. Fletcher who saw him, "but hang on to them." Fletcher's company now pushed along Lugos Trench till it looked down at Brunn where the Germans, all unconscious, were shooting at the companies on the lower slopes. Fire was opened on their backs and they began to break. At this crisis, 500 yards ahead of the 25th along the crest came 120 Germans in fours. Machine-guns—the weapon required—had just arrived, but, as often happened with men so few, they were short of ammunition. A burst from Lewis guns at 350 yards, however, set the enemy to flight with many wounded left on the ground. The Queenslanders then turned again on the Germans in Brunn. At the same time Capt. Hosking (27th) attacked them from Haut Allaines.⁸⁶ About 100 surrendered and numbers fled over the hill. The left of the 25th followed so close that the fugitives could not settle in Antigone Alley (the extension of Lugos) but throwing away machine-guns, packs and other kit fled past the Aizecourt road. This was the objective; and, though most of the 25th stopped



⁸³ Sgt. W. F. Anderson, M.M., (No. 2106; 25th Bn.). Farmer; of Rosebank, N.S.W.; b. Bellingen, N.S.W., 12 May 1897.

⁸⁴ Maj. J. L. Fletcher, D.S.O., M.C.; 25th Bn. School teacher; of Cunnamulla, Q'land; b. Warwick, Q'land, 4 Dec. 1890.

⁸⁵ Cpl. S. L. Anderson, M.M. (No. 2107; 25th Bn.). Farmer; of Richmond River, N.S.W.; b. Bellingen, N.S.W., 11 Feb. 1894.

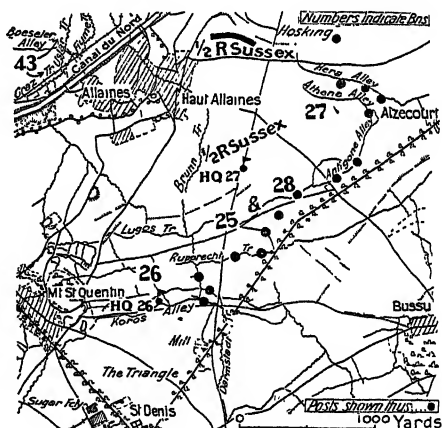
⁸⁶ A very troublesome machine-gun post in Allaines was suppressed by vigorous action of platoons under Lt. H. C. McKee (Mooni River, Dalby, Q'land) and Sgt. J. A. Connelly (Perth, W.A.; died 3 Sep. 1929).

at Antigone Alley,⁸⁷ parties sent down the cross saps formed posts on or near the road. Meanwhile, after Stokes mortars of the 7th Battery had shelled the crater strong-post, Corpl. Anderson's party entered it; its garrison had withdrawn to the Triangle leaving seventeen machine-guns (after removing their locks) and two trench-mortars. It was some of these Germans that ran into the 26th. Fletcher's company (25th) came down after them and the posts of the 26th on the Aizecourt road were re-established. A scout found Darmstadt Trench beyond the road crowded with the enemy.

At Allaines, immediately after the capture of Brunn Trench at 7 a.m., 600 Germans retired. The two remaining company officers of the 27th, Capt. Hosking and Lieut. Rollins,⁸⁸ with 28 men, followed them eastwards towards Aizecourt till met at 400 yards from the

village by machine-gun bullets and by point blank fire from a line of guns along the height to the north-east. The party sheltered in an old camouflaged trench, with a wide view of the watery Tortille valley. Part of the 74th Division was advancing down its western slope and the Germans quietly retiring ahead of

them. These British stopped far back at Scutari Trench and the Germans reaching the guns re-formed. No sign of Hosking or any of the 27th ahead could be seen by Maj. Raper,⁸⁹ its acting commander, from the sunken road east of Brunn Trench until a man was detected coming from the front. It was



⁸⁷ This was cleared partly by the 28th, Lt E. P. Folley (Nairne, S.A.) being killed in doing so.

⁸⁸ Lt. C. J. Rollins, M.C.; 27th Bn. Butler; of Adelaide; b. Cobham, Eng., 1890.

⁸⁹ Lt.-Col. P. C. Raper; 27th Bn. Officer of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Hobart; b. Great Wakering, Essex, Eng., 12 July 1881.

Rollins sent back by Hosking to collect stragglers and ascertain the position on the right. About 50 men were found in the sunken road and elsewhere and sent up the ridge on Hosking's right to occupy Hera and Athene Alleys, offshoots of Antigone Trench. A patrol of the 25th under Lieut. Eather, probing Antigone Trench found them there. Parties of the 28th filled the gaps and one and a half machine-gun companies (22nd and 5th) safeguarded the ground won. Hosking's post was withdrawn at dusk. During the day the two artillery brigades⁹⁰ lent by the 3rd Division and two batteries of the 4th A.F.A. Brigade were dribbled up the Tortille valley to Feuillaucourt—a difficult move as the enemy held the high ground ahead.

The attack had struck the line on which the 38th Divn. and Alexander Regt. had been rallied the night before. Officers had been organising it all night and it was well manned, though by a medley of units—Alexander, engineers, machine-gunners, trench-mortar men, 94th, 96th, 122nd. "Then came September 2nd" says the history of the 94th, "for us an inconsolable day of Sedan." Both battalions of the 96th on the Mount lost their commanders. In Allaines the staff of the III/122nd was cut off and its commander, Maj. Fürst von Waldburg-Ziel, killed. At 8.15 the 42nd Bde. permitted a retirement to the line Moislains—hill north-west of Aizecourt—hill north of Bussu; and on the British front, from Allaines northwards, this was carried out calmly; on the Australian front it was a rout. The 94th I.R. came out with barely 150 men; the 122nd with 170; the Alexander with 465; the battalions of the 96th had fallen to 100. They rallied on the Aizecourt-Péronne road. Aizecourt itself had just been occupied by an *élite* division, the Alpine Corps, withdrawn from the river front. It found fugitives of the Guard Divn. enjoying the provision dumps, and to restore order it was directed to relieve the 2nd Guard Divn. that night.

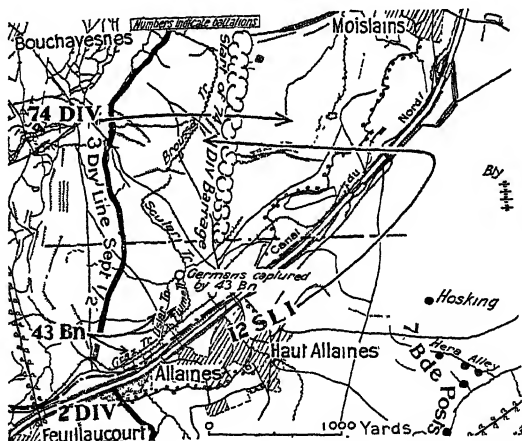
Although the 27th Battalion apparently saw little of it, German as well as British records make it certain that the "600 Germans" who retired from the eastern part of Allaines and Haut Allaines were driven out by the first line of the 74th Division. Germans were crowded about Allaines, being driven thither by the 2nd, 3rd and 74th Divisions; but there too the Germans were exhausted beyond their usual power of resistance. The 43rd Battalion—the only unit of the 3rd Division now remaining in front line—had to clear the small

⁹⁰ 3rd A.F.A. and 14th R.F.A. Bdes. A section of the 13th Bty., 4th A.F.A. Bde., under Lt. J. R. S. Evans (Adelaide) supported the 27th Bn., firing from the Tortille river east of Feuillaucourt. Slow communication, however, shackled the detached guns; the German staff used such guns more skilfully.

West of the Somme part of the artillery also had advanced. Lt. A. Mehan (Townsville, Q'land), 5th A.F.A. Bde. was mortally wounded this day.

triangle between the 2nd Division advancing north-east and the 74th advancing east. Moving from Rollin Trench via Boeseler Alley, it seized without opposition Graz Trench opposite Allaines; then, bombing northwards towards Scutari Trench, it hemmed 150 Germans into a fork of the trenches between the 43rd and an attached platoon of the 41st, 14 strong, under Lieut. Colin Butler. A deadlock was ended by a lance-corporal, L. C. Weathers,⁹¹ killing the German leader and then bringing up more bombs and several men, who pinned down the Germans while he bombed them from the open.⁹²

Meanwhile the 229th Brigade, first line of the 74th Division, had met great difficulty. As has already been explained, although the 3rd Australian Division on the previous day had failed to take Scutari and Broussa Trenches, III Corps had planned for the 74th to start east of them, and was unable to change the plan. The 74th had therefore to take that trench line without help from the barrage, which lay beyond it. The handicap was enormous. The troops lost the first trench-line were met by intense fire from Haut Allaines on the Australian



front. The flank battalion, 12th Somerset Light Infantry,⁹³ made for Allaines from the north and, after capturing many

⁹¹ Cpl. L. C. Weathers, V.C. (No. 1153; 43rd Bn.). Undertaker; of Parkside, S.A.; b. Te Koparu, N.Z., 14 May 1890. Died of wounds, 29 Sep. 1918.

⁹² L.-Cpl. H. H. H. Thompson (Pickering, S.A.) kept the Germans down by Lewis gun fire. Lt. Butler, who had been held up, now managed to dash across a gap into the German trench and its garrison surrendered. Weathers received the Victoria Cross.

⁹³ Butler, a most reliable officer, noted that before the fight neither the men nor the N.C.O's of the British company on his flank had any notion "where they were going or what they had to do."

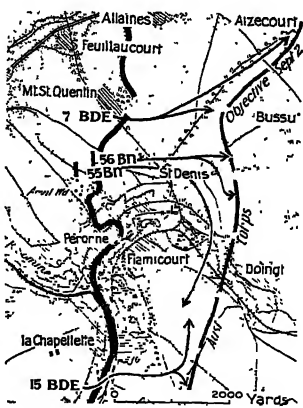
Germans,⁹⁴ turned north again, east of the Canal, with the 14th Black Watch on its left as if to cut off Moislains.⁹⁵ Here it ran into point blank shelling by field-guns and receiving a severe shock, fell back to Broussa Trench.⁹⁶ The support brigade (230th) following at a wide distance reached Scutari Trench, and the 16th Royal Sussex, whose duty was to link with the Australians, then crossed near Allaines and got touch with Maj. Raper (27th) at 9 a.m. It was arranged to keep two companies on his left and two in reserve.⁹⁷

The Germans met by the 43rd Bn. and 74th Divn. were the mixture of troops—Regiments Augusta, Alexander, 478th, Franz, 479th, 447th, 445th, 446th, Engineer Companies and others—rallied in the battle of Sept. 1. The Franz Regt. came out of this fight with 216 men (its III Bn. with 14), Augusta Regt. was weaker. But the 1st Bav. Jäger Regt. (Alpine Corps) was already behind them and relieved them that night.

The Australian Corps had made the required flank, but, the III Corps' attack having failed, the "flank" protruded from Fourth Army's front like the point of a pencil.

**5th Division,
September 2**

On the Péronne front the 14th Brigade had attacked with almost precisely the same plan as on the previous day. This time the 56th Battalion in column of companies was to advance due east from Anvil Wood cemetery to St. Denis Wood, on passing which the leading company would seize the hill ahead and the second extend the flank on that ridge. Two companies of the 55th following behind would swing round to the hill south of Flamicourt, and get touch with the 15th Brigade. The 54th Battalion would complete the capture of Péronne and then move out east of it. At the conference at Herbécourt that drew up the 5th Division's plans it was assumed



⁹⁴ Towner's machine-guns had fired at these at 2,600 yards.

⁹⁵ A report that the 229th Brigade reached the edge of Aizecourt le Haut is almost certainly incorrect. Possibly observers mistook Hosking's party for them.

⁹⁶ It lost this day 11 officers (5 killed) and 216 others.

⁹⁷ In Brunn Trench and the sunken road ahead of it.

that the 15th Brigade would cross the Somme south of Péronne, and the orders to the 14th Brigade were based on this premiss. Brig.-Genl. Elliott of the 15th was not present; the car driver sent to bring him could not find his panoramic headquarters in the dark amid the maze of old trenches; and Elliott, equally lost, wandered many hours on foot before arriving in the small hours to find his colleagues gone. It was then learnt that he and his battalion commanders had decided to give up the notion of crossing south of Péronne, the bombardment that afternoon having failed to subdue German resistance there.⁹⁸ Elliott decided to send his battalions with or through the 14th Brigade. One of his most trusted former subordinates, Lieut.-Col. Norman Marshall of Polygon Wood fame, happened to command the 54th and Elliott resolved to send him the 58th also, to use as he wished in taking Péronne and then to move east and south of it. The 59th and 60th would reach Flamicourt heights by following the rest of the 14th Brigade round or through Péronne.

At 3.30, borrowing a horse Elliott rode back to his headquarters and at 4.45, told his colonels⁹⁹ the plan of attack and that zero hour was 6 o'clock, but in the hurry forgot to add that the bombardment would start at the time of the 2nd Division's attack, 5.30. Moreover notice of his plans could not reach the 14th Brigade in time; that brigade was also unaware that the 2nd Division was starting half an hour before it.

As the artillery would shell Bretagne suburb, the Brickworks and St. Denis Wood from 5.30 till 6 before embracing more distant targets,¹⁰⁰ it was necessary for Lieut. Waite (53rd) at the Sugar Factory to be first recalled. At 3 a.m. efforts to reach him having failed, Pte. Currey volunteered to make his third attempt, and going out far into the disputed front he stood up and called with all his lung power: "Waitsy get in!" The Germans turned on him every weapon they had;

**15th Brigade
reaches
Péronne**

⁹⁸ After bombardment second attempts had been made at the causeway between Flamicourt and Péronne, the railway bridge, and the bridge of floats south of Chapellette.

⁹⁹ A wireless message sent by Elliott at 3.30 reached them late.

¹⁰⁰ Part of the barrage would remain on St. Denis Wood till 6.20, and on the eastern part of Bretagne suburb till 6.40; Chair Wood and Flamicourt were among the chief targets later.

he was gassed and his respirator was shot through. But Waite heard him and returned.

The main task was that of the 56th Battalion, to advance north of Péronne; and unless the flanking machine-guns on Péronne ramparts were silenced this advance in the teeth of other machine-guns about St. Denis never was practicable. Accordingly the Bretagne ramparts were to be muffled in shell-fire till 6.20—their eastern part till 6.40—and the 54th in Péronne was also to attack as quickly as this barrage allowed. But Lieut.-Col. Marshall (54th) misunderstood part of the orders to mean that a company of the 56th would advance through Péronne by way of the bridge near Anvil Wood cemetery, and he had merely ordered Capt. Downing to mop up after it passed.¹ Having given this order, after 70 hours' continuous work, Marshall was snatching a sleep when Lieut. Moon of the 58th reached him² expecting urgent orders for the employment of that battalion, which Elliott had lent to Marshall, who, of course, knew nothing about it.

The situation was bewildering. Marshall believed that his part was ended, the 56th taking the active rôle. Moon, and Maj. Ferres who had sent him, naturally expected Marshall to have heard of Elliott's plan, and to find this almost unparalleled generosity appreciated and were bitterly hurt when Marshall referred them to the commander of the 56th who was "running the show" but added that he thought the 58th should be held in reserve but one company might usefully help Capt. Downing's company (54th) to mop up the town.

Meanwhile the 58th had reached Péronne punctually and at 5.30 was filing in sections up the street from the bridge³ when the bombardment opened. The quick German reply caught the troops in a position which, if warned, their leaders would certainly have avoided. The leading company had then reached shelter at the moat but Ferres, walking behind, and

¹ The 54th had also to occupy the earlier position of the 56th between Anvil Wood and Péronne.

² At 5.55. Moon had seen Downing at 5.30.

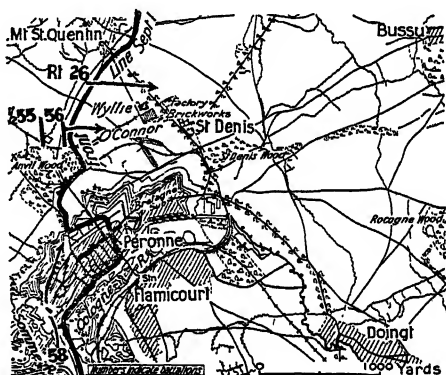
³ The Amiens road bridge. The bridges and causeways opposite Radegonde, Halle, and the Nord Canal also had been opened by now, mainly by work of the 6th Fld. Coy.—whose commander, Capt. J. H. Cartwright (Melbourne) was mortally wounded at Halle on Sep. 1—and 2nd Pioneer Bn.; some of them like those at Ommiécourt and Feuillères, were now being improved, first for horse transport and then for motor traffic.

Capt. Forsyth⁴ beside him, were wounded by the first shell and in a few minutes Lieut. Deane and 40 men were hit. Part of the battalion was temporarily scattered, but Lieut. Morrison⁵ led the rest by an avoiding route to the moat where, near the Cléry road bridge, the 58th reorganised.

When Moon returned with Marshall's reply the attack had started. The 54th in Péronne, waiting for the 56th to come through, made no advance. The bombardment

**14th Brigade,
September 2**

of Bretagne suburb started late and ragged.⁶ German counter-shelling fell on the waiting 56th causing loss. Capt. Mann⁷ had already been hit. Lieut. Musgrove⁸ was now killed and on the start-line three more officers⁹ were wounded, leaving there only two officers, both in the one company,¹⁰ the others being led by their Coy. Sgt.-Majors. The strength of the four was 180, and they passed through the 53rd at the railway banks into a storm of machine-gun fire from the ramparts. It was daylight, the mist was rising, and the machine-gun crews were visible along the ramparts. Germans had reoccupied the Sugar Factory and batteries on the wooded hills fired direct at the advancing lines. In the two companies of 55th Lieut. Inglis¹¹ was killed; and, vainly



⁴ Maj. R. B. Forsyth, M.C.; 58th Bn.; and 6th Div. Provost Corps, A.I.F., 1939. Farmer; of Bunyip, Vic.; b. Bunyip, 8 Sep. 1891.

⁵ Maj. W. Morrison; 58th Bn. Grazier; of Wangaratta, Vic.; b. Wangaratta, 17 Apr. 1894.

⁶ Possibly the orders were late.

⁷ Capt. G. H. Mann, M.C.; 56th Bn. Engineering student; of Rose Bay, N.S.W.; b. Surry Hills, N.S.W., 10 Feb. 1892.

⁸ Lt. H. R. Musgrove; 56th Bn. Merchant; of Hurstville, N.S.W.; b. Hurstville, 1 Jan. 1896. Killed in action, 2 Sep. 1918.

⁹ Lts. H. R. Williams (Croydon, N.S.W.), A. W. Hicks (Petersham, N.S.W.) and E. Bullock (Woollahra, N.S.W.). Capt. E. L. Dalkeith (Liverpool, N.S.W.) had been wounded on Sep. 1.

¹⁰ Lts. J. Bull (Trangie, N.S.W.) and W. E. Nancarrow (Sydney).

¹¹ Lt. A. J. Inglis 55th Bn. Farmer; of Bellingen, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 1889. Killed in action, 2 Sep. 1918.

trying to support the 56th, Capt. Pinkstone and most of his men were wounded. But, advancing by rushes, Acting Coy. Sgt.-Major O'Connor¹² commanding the 56th's front company, with eight signallers and runners reached the Factory, and there and at the neighbouring cuttings and banks O'Connor collected the survivors. Capt. Wyllie's company of the 55th also reached the Factory and found part of the 26th (2nd Divn.) just beyond the Bapaume road there.

German histories say that during the night the I/258th R.I.R. in Bretagne suburb had been reinforced by two companies of the 161st I.R. and a platoon of engineers. The garrison barricaded itself and prepared for a last fight. The commandant, Capt. Schwerdtfeger (I/65th) in Flamicourt was ordered by 185th Divn. to return to the town with his staff. The bombardment at 5.30 caused loss among these crowded troops, but the history of the 258th says that its posts on the ramparts had "an easy job" in beating the attack north of the town.

Meanwhile Maj. Ferres of the 58th with Lieuts. Sproule¹³ and Slaughter¹⁴ reconnoitred the town. Machine-guns in Bretagne suburb and Flamicourt fired down the streets, and at 7.30, receiving Marshall's message but seeing no sign of the 56th, Ferres decided to act on his own responsibility and clear the town. Sending Lieut. Morey¹⁵ first to patrol it he moved three companies through the north of the main town to its eastern edge. They crossed the bridge leading to Bretagne suburb without loss but were fired on as they emerged from the bridge. Forsyth's company, led by Slaughter with two patrols ahead, attacked the houses north of the road, Lieut. Morrison's (now 40 strong) those south of it. Machine-guns on the eastern ramparts, at windows, and on mounds of rubble fired at them as did trench-mortars;¹⁶ but the advanced Lewis gunners worked from house to house and heap to heap till they could command some German post, when their patrol would rush it.¹⁷ The inner

¹² C.S.M. A. I. O'Connor, D.C.M. (No. 2965; 56th Bn.). Commission Agent; of West Wyalong, N.S.W.; b. Deniliquin, N.S.W., 5 May 1889. Died 11 Nov. 1929.

¹³ Lt.-Col. W. St. G. Sproule; 58th Bn. Barrister-at-law; of Kew, Vic.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 11 Feb. 1879.

¹⁴ Lt. T. A. Slaughter, M.C.; 58th Bn. Farmer and grazier; of Wimmera district, Vic.; b. "Dunmunkle," Murtoa, Vic., 13 Mar. 1892.

¹⁵ Lt. H. V. Morey; 58th Bn. Clerk; of St. Kilda, Vic.; b. Lilydale, Vic., 1890. Killed in action, 2 Sep. 1918.

¹⁶ Lt. N. L. Mackinlay (Geelong, Vic.) was wounded by one of their bombs.

¹⁷ A machine-gunner at a distant upper window hit many men till a Lewis gunner working up toppled man and gun into the street.

flanks of both companies were at first held up. But Sergt. Moss,¹⁸ crossing the road southwards in order to get better aim upon a house north of it, chanced on a machine-gun crew opposing the southern company, and in a running fight¹⁹ through house and gardens captured two machine-gun posts. The post north of the road was next captured; in it was a mortally wounded battalion commander. Meanwhile Lieut. Morrison observed five machine-guns on the ramparts 150 yards ahead. His Lewis gunners firing together put their crews out of action. Near the Sugar Factory Acting-C.S.M. O'Connor, who had seen this advance, turned his riflemen on Germans who were opposing it from the eastern ramparts. These switched their fire upon him and, when the 58th approached, ran from the town to St. Denis Wood. Others sheltered in the ditch of the fort where they surrendered.

From German accounts it appears that the 58th drove through the 161st south of the main street thus taking the I/258th, on the northern rampart, in rear. All company commanders of the I/258th were hit and Schwertfeger (I/65th) and his staff captured. The two other battalions of the 258th²⁰ were now hurried forward to form, together with engineers, artillery, and 65th I.R., a line beyond the town, between the Sugar Factory and Flamicourt.

By 10 o'clock Péronne was wholly taken. The Australian garrison was weak—some 150 of the 58th with 30 of the 54th under Lieut. Harvey; but Lieut. Laing²¹ of the support company of the 58th organised a chain of posts with seven captured machine-guns manned by the 58th and 14th Machine Gun Company; and Col. Marshall coming round the front judged it amply strong.²²

Behind the 56th and 55th, both pinned down north of the town, there had early arrived the 59th, of Elliott's brigade followed by the 60th.²³ Working from the cemetery north of

¹⁸ Sgt. H. C. Moss, M.M. (No. 304; 58th Bn.). Bank clerk; of Guildford, W.A.; b. Chadwell Heath, Essex, Eng., 10 June 1890.

¹⁹ Cpl. E. Gladstone (Malvern, Vic.) who also led was presently killed.

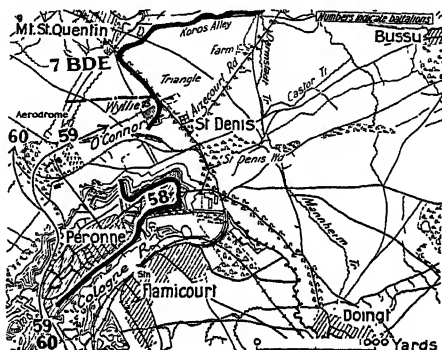
²⁰ Probably each about 400 strong.

²¹ Lt. G. Laing, M.C.; 58th Bn. Jackaroo; of Balmain, N.S.W., and Camooweal district, Q'land; b. Inverell, N.S.W., 25 Dec. 1893.

²² Eight machine-guns had come up but four were sent back to reserve. Maj. Ferres and Capt. Forsyth now limped off for attention to their wounds, and Capt. Peacock (57th) arrived to command the 58th.

²³ The battalions, Col. Scanlan leading, had hurried over the now remade road-bridge, through the south-west of Péronne, reeking with sneezing gas, to the cemetery. Maj. Kerr (60th) gave his company commanders their orders as they marched.

the railways towards the Sugar Factory the 59th came under machine-gun fire from distant parts of the **St. Denis** Mount as well as from St. Denis Wood, and direct shelling from the hills ahead. Making his way with the leading company to the banks near the Sugar Factory Col. Scanlan met Capt. Wyllie of the 55th. Germans could be seen streaming down old trenches from Bussu to St. Denis Wood, which the 56th would have to pass before the 59th moved round Péronne. Col. Scanlan, whose artillery *liaison* officer²⁴ and four orderlies had been hit, returned and advised Elliott that to advance was impossible till Mont St. Quentin was cleared and artillery support arranged. Col. Woods of the 55th and Maj. Kerr of the 60th, then near the aerodrome, agreed. The battalions were ordered to take what shelter they could and for hours lay under bombardment which, around the aerodrome, was at times as intense as those at Polygon Wood.²⁵



But in the front line the clearing of Péronne made the position much easier. The 55th at the Sugar Factory sniped the Germans out of the nearest cottages of St. Denis, and the enemy began to retire not only from that village but from rear positions, Aizecourt road and Darmstadt Trench. The 55th and 56th could now move with comparative safety and Capt. Wyllie, after consulting the posts of the 26th and Acting-C.S.M. O'Connor, sent patrols through St. Denis, the Australian machine-guns now on the ramparts supporting them. Beyond the rise east of St. Denis Lieut. Ellsmore²⁶ and his

²⁴ Lt. F. B. Sharp (Islington, N.S.W.).

²⁵ Lt. Malcolm Kirkham (Dandenong, Vic.), 59th Bn., was killed. Two guns of the 13th Bty. coming up through Anvil Wood in support of the 26th Bn. were for a time used by Scanlan against St. Denis, 1,200 yards away. They were eventually forced back by machine-gun fire to the Cléry road. Here one gun and several men besides the section commander, Lt. C. G. Roberts (Sydney; Capt. Aust. Rly. Units, A.I.F., 1940), were put out of action by shells, but Cpl. M. S. Kellett (Penrith, N.S.W.) carried on.

²⁶ Lt. R. Ellsmore, M.C.; 55th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Manly, N.S.W.; b. Moss Vale, N.S.W., 27 Aug. 1891.

platoon ran into a German post and, at the cost of three men wounded, captured an officer, ten men and two machine-guns. Ellsmore with difficulty brought in his prisoners, but the line was advanced sufficiently to keep the Germans back at the Aizecourt road; their troops had been rallied there and held it all day. At one time a message came from some Australian officer²⁷ in that area, asking for reinforcements, but any attempt to cross the Triangle was hopeless. Lieut.-Col. Robinson (26th) placed his headquarters on its northern side at Koros Alley, and after dark a party under Lieut. Tozer (28th) pushing out through this alley formed a post at the farm and copse on the Aizecourt road close in front of Darmstadt Trench, which was still thronged by the enemy.

During the afternoon Acting-C.S.M. O'Connor fetched reinforcements for his line²⁸ and extended it to the moat. At 3 p.m., after reconnaissance by German airmen, the new line was bombarded and more Germans dribbled down from Bussu.²⁹ The 58th thrust posts east of Péronne but could not reach the Bapaume road. Finally the 55th and 56th were ordered to clear St. Denis Wood. They were very weak but were planning to attack after dark³⁰ when the order was cancelled. The 14th Brigade would now be relieved by the 59th and 60th Battalions, while the 57th from the quiet Somme front would change places with the 58th in Péronne, the whole of the 5th Division's front being thus taken over by Elliott's brigade.

On the Mount, up which the Australians had now thrust for two miles, nothing more could be done until III Corps came into line.³¹ Next day reports from III and V Corps suggested that the Germans north of the Australian front had withdrawn, and after dark the 230th Brigade (74th Divn.) came up. Meanwhile the 15th Brigade tried to get its patrols into Flamicourt (now held by the III/258th R.I.R.). In the small hours of

²⁷ Possibly Lt. Major, *see p. 857*.

²⁸ He could semaphore back to the 50th but brought these men himself, leaving Sgt. F. B. Davidson (Narrabri, N.S.W.) temporarily in charge.

²⁹ Lieut. Laing's machine-guns on the ramparts enfiladed them.

³⁰ Capt. F. J. Cotterell (55th) was killed reconnoitring.

³¹ To guard the 7th Brigade's flank the Sussex were retained for twenty-four hours, the 43rd Battalion stayed on to maintain two posts on the Canal, and the 22nd (6th Bde.) also stayed in support.

September 3rd Lieut. Marxsen³² (57th) twice tried to cross the causeway to the railway station. General Elliott after another personal reconnaissance believed it could be reached from the railway bridge but at noon when Marxsen tried it this very fine officer was killed. A patrol under Lieut. Meara, working back along the railway from east of Péronne, ran into a post at a culvert. Flamicourt station could be reached only by these narrow tracks and heavy shelling did not silence the machine-guns there.

That night (Sept. 3-4) north of Péronne the 60th Battalion advanced through the 59th with fighting patrols and occupied the Aizecourt road. The lower staffs now planned to capture Darmstadt Trench and Flamicourt, while, unknown to them, the higher ones, finding that the Germans had thinned their Somme line to buttress the Mont St. Quentin front, were scheming a concentration on the right and a crossing at St. Christ.³³ III Corps would relieve the Australians of the Mont St. Quentin front.

Rawlinson's order for this went out on September 3rd. But next day from every village for miles ahead of Fourth Army's front rose pillars of smoke. Farther north on the 2nd the Germans had rapidly withdrawn across the Canal du Nord. A retirement to the Hindenburg Line was clearly in preparation or in progress. Rawlinson ordered his two corps to follow any such retirement with strong advanced guards. Monash decided that the Australian front—(to be narrowed that night according to Rawlinson's order) should be held by the 32nd, 5th, and 3rd Divisions. During September 4th it became evident that the German was now holding with only light forces.³⁴ Shortly after noon Lieut.-Col. Robinson (26th) himself with one companion patrolled down Darmstadt Trench for 300 yards before coming on a German sentry. At nightfall his battalion advanced to it, being relieved later when the 74th Division took over the left of the 2nd Australian Division's front and the 8th Brigade³⁵ its right and the front of the 59th Battalion. The 57th found Darmstadt Trench empty and the 58th crossed the railway bridge and entered Flamicourt.

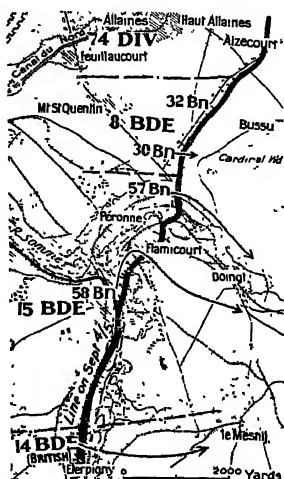
³² Lt. R. M. Marxsen; 57th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat, 29 Sep. 1891. Killed in action, 3 Sep. 1918.

³³ At the same time attacking south from Péronne.

³⁴ German records show that they were "very severely" attacked this day from the air. Flamicourt also was bombarded, Germans bolting to Chair Wood.

³⁵ Since Sep. 1 the 8th Bde. had been in support near Péronne railway bridge.

The Germans had retired and must be followed at once. At dawn on the 5th the 57th occupied Mannheim Trench on the wooded hill east of Péronne and, working south through old trenches to avoid machine-gun fire from rear parties, outflanked the Germans in Doingt, who then fled.³⁶ Two companies of the 57th hurried through the village and south along the road to le Mesnil; the 58th made over the hill south of Flamicourt to the same position.³⁷ In the afternoon touch was gained with the 32nd Division. Early that morning the 15th Highland Light Infantry had crossed south of Eterpigny, taking 54 prisoners with 9 machine-guns. Towards 10 a.m. the 5th/6th Royal Scots waded across under machine-gun fire at Brie, capturing 7 prisoners and 8 machine-guns, the 1/5th Border Regiment following. At Cizancourt and St. Christ the 2/K.O.Y.L.I. could not cross until 3 p.m., when it took 105 prisoners. The bridges were rebuilt and by night the front was over two miles beyond the Somme.



The Germans had clearly retired to the line they had recently been digging through Nurlu and Tincourt.

Their records disclose that the Second Army's withdrawal had been ordered on Sept. 2. The first stage—to the Tincourt Line—was to take place on the night of the 3rd. The abandoned area was to be laid waste, buildings, bridges, wells and cross-roads destroyed.

General Elliott asked the supporting artillery to screen his infantry with a smoke barrage. By 4 o'clock on the 5th the 8th Brigade was through the woods at Bussu. That night the advanced guards of 3rd and 5th Divisions came up ready to move through.

³⁶ In trying to escape across the front of Lieut. Meara's company many Germans were hit. Cpl. W. Kilgour (Tarnagulla, Vic.) with a companion, using a German rifle, stalked some Germans in a sap leading to the woods, capturing one.

³⁷ It took 14 prisoners. Near the marshes it found and annihilated the post that had stopped the 57th on Aug. 31. At one stage two companies made eastwards across its front; only later was it realised that these were German.

CHAPTER XIX

THE HINDENBURG OUTPOST-LINE

THE capture of Mont St. Quentin and Péronne is held by many Australian soldiers to be the most brilliant achievement of the A.I.F.¹ Among the operations planned by Monash it stands out as one of movement rather than a set piece; indeed within Australian experience of the Western Front it was the only important fight in which quick, free manoeuvre played a decisive part. It furnishes a complete answer to the comment that Monash was merely a composer of set pieces. But Monash himself realised that it was also largely a soldiers' battle. Monash passed four brigades under the enemy's nose round the bend of the Somme, with all his invariable care in planning, supplying and bridging. But what an instrument was to his hand! The picture given in the histories of some German regiments of their slender, exhausted remnants being overwhelmed by masses of fresh troops is sheer propaganda. The 2nd and 3rd Divisions at least, with companies depleted to the German level, weary with—in some cases—incredibly protracted effort, and without normal artillery support, constantly attacked more than their number of Germans in strong, well wired positions and captured more prisoners than they could safely hold. The tactics were necessarily left largely to divisional, brigade, battalion and even platoon commanders; they were sometimes brilliant and sometimes faulty, but in general the dash, intelligence, and persistence of the troops dealt a stunning blow to five German divisions, drove the enemy from one of his key positions in France, and took

¹ Gen. Monash says (*Australian Victories*, p. 192) that Gen. Rawlinson "more than once referred to the operation as the finest single feat of the war." It was immediately after it that Haig welcomed a party of newspaper leaders, newly arrived from several dominions, with the observations referred to on page 485. His note, that the Australian ones "were very much surprised" inadequately describes the effect.

2,600 prisoners at a cost of slightly over 3,000 casualties.²

The Germans had intended to hold the Somme line indefinitely; but the loss of it at Mont St. Quentin and Péronne was only a second reason for Ludendorff's decision on September 2nd to retire from it;³ German records show that the main cause was—as Haig had planned and now realised—the blow struck that day by Third Army in conjunction with the Canadians (First Army). The XVII British Corps (Third Army) broke through the junction of the Drocourt-Quéant line with the Hindenburg Line and drove back the Seventeenth German Army. The position was considered too dangerous to allow of the maintenance of the Somme line farther south and as the German Second Army's line at Péronne had already gone and all the armies engaged were exhausted, dwindling, and in desperate need of rest to regain their morale, Ludendorff ordered the retirement which would shorten his line, economise troops, and, he hoped, give them at least a short rest.

² The detailed infantry casualties for Aug. 31-Sept. 2 were:

| | | | 2nd Division | | | | | |
|------------------|--------|------|--------------|--------|------|------------------|--------|------|
| 5th Brigade | | | 6th Brigade | | | 7th Brigade | | |
| Bde. H.Q. | Offrs. | O.R. | 21st Bn. | Offrs. | O.R. | 25th Bn. | Offrs. | O.R. |
| 17th Bn. | 8 | 151 | 22nd Bn. | 3 | 42 | 26th Bn. | 8 | 113 |
| 18th Bn. | 4 | 68 | 23rd Bn. | 11 | 139 | 27th Bn. | 9 | 100 |
| 19th Bn. | 7 | 101 | 24th | 8 | 134 | 28th Bn. | 6 | 63 |
| 20th Bn. | 5 | 121 | | | | 7th L.T.M. Bty. | — | 6 |
| 5th L.T.M. Bty. | — | 4 | | | | | | |
| | 24 | 447 | | 28 | 422 | | 32 | 417 |
| | | | 3rd Division | | | | | |
| 9th Brigade | | | 10th Brigade | | | 11th Brigade | | |
| 33rd Bn. | Offrs. | O.R. | 37th Bn. | Offrs. | O.R. | 41st Bn. | Offrs. | O.R. |
| 34th Bn. | 3 | 40 | 38th Bn. | 5 | 70 | 42nd Bn. | 2 | 68 |
| | 3 | 64 | 39th Bn. | 5 | 59 | 43rd Bn. | 6 | 63 |
| | | | 40th Bn. | 6 | 62 | 11th L.T.M. Bty. | 7 | 60 |
| | | | | 6 | 57 | | — | 11 |
| | 6 | 104 | | 22 | 248 | | 15 | 202 |
| | | | 5th Division | | | | | |
| 14th Brigade | | | 15th Brigade | | | | | |
| 53rd Bn. | Offrs. | O.R. | 57th Bn. | Offrs. | O.R. | 58th Bn. | Offrs. | O.R. |
| 54th Bn. | 11 | 241 | 58th Bn. | 1 | 21 | 59th Bn. | 5 | 80 |
| 55th Bn. | 9 | 173 | 60th Bn. | 6 | 106 | 15th L.T.M. Bty. | 7 | 52 |
| 56th Bn. | 11 | 153 | | 1 | 10 | | | |
| 14th L.T.M. Bty. | 11 | 216 | | | | | | |
| | 2 | 14 | | | | | | |
| | 44 | 797 | | | | | 20 | 269 |

In the advance from Aug. 24-30 the 3rd Div. had 1,200 casualties.

³ Ludendorff himself implies this in *War Memories*, Vol II, p. 695. The loss of Mont St. Quentin he attributes to the loss of the Ommiécourt-Péronne bridge-head on Aug. 29.

But the Fourth British Army also was subjected to intense strain; though Haig had intended it to play a quiescent rôle, and not to draw on his reserves, Monash and Godley had really forced his hand. On August 31st Monash was warned by General Hobbs that the stress on the 5th Division was approaching the limits of endurance. Before the next three days' fighting ended the strain on the 2nd and 3rd Divisions was even greater. The impression was growing among the Australian troops that because they were so successful the British Command was using them more persistently than its own troops and for tasks which the British were unable fully to perform. Numbers were sinking.

Battalions are going into some of these fights 150 strong (wrote one observer); 300 or 350 seems to be a big number in the fighting line nowadays. They are not as done as they were after Pozières, but they certainly are feeling that they have had more than their share of fighting. . . . There is a feeling that "there won't be any dominion army left soon." "There'll be no more A.I.F. before long."

The same diarist quotes General Monash as saying that "six days' rest and a bath restores the elasticity of a division. The troops are not tired—a little footsore."

It was essential (Monash writes in *Australian Victories*) that they should be called upon to yield up the last particle of effort of which they are capable. . . . I was compelled to disregard the evident signs of overstrain which were brought to my notice by the divisional generals and their brigadiers.

Actually conditions were approaching those in which the regimental officers, in giving orders for some renewed stage in the prolonged effort were not without the consciousness that any chain of mischances increasing the burden might precipitate a local mutiny. It was at Péronne that the first recorded mutiny in the A.I.F. occurred.⁴ The 59th Battalion when relieved on September 14th after a week of repeated efforts and continuous strain had no sooner reached its bivouac and settled to sleep than it was summoned to the line again to follow the enemy's retirement. Three platoons refused and their officers supported them, saying that the men "believe their action to be the only way they can impress the (higher) authorities with their needs." The refusal was

⁴ There had during this period been slighter incidents, of which only hints are given in the records.

eventually overcome—but was probably one of the “signs of overstrain” to which Monash refers.

Two widely different policies were being adopted to sustain the exertions of the troops. Monash believed that for the effort now demanded of them they required a stimulus keener than that of the high moral issues on which Birdwood had always based his appeal. He told the Official War Correspondent that

he was ceasing to appeal to the Australians on the ground of patriotism—he was not asking them to fight for patriotism or public interest. The appeal which he was going to make, and was making, to them was on grounds of prestige.⁵

He accordingly circulated to the troops from time to time a news sheet with extracts from the French and British Press signalling the achievements of the Australians. In conformity with this policy he complained strongly to G.H.Q. of the undoubted covering-up in the Press of the part played by dominion troops in the great battle of August 8th; though that victory was outstandingly an achievement of theirs, no reader of *The Times*, for example, would have had the remotest notion of their rôle in it,⁶ nor indeed was this generally realised in England for years afterwards.⁷ It seems certain that in the interests of the whole side, to avoid giving a handle for German propaganda, G.H.Q. wished to avoid stressing the prominence of dominion troops in the successes of 1918; but on this occasion this policy (so different from that of 1941) overreached itself and caused much resentment. Brig.-Genl. Brand reported to Monash that in the 4th Brigade, which had snatched a costly victory from the difficult situation left by the failure of English troops on its left, a discontented section was growling: “Whatever we do they’ll say *they* won the battle; next time we’ll let them win it.” It was now that Monash

⁵ From the War Correspondent’s diary.

⁶ Haig’s brief *communiqué* it is true mentioned “French, Canadian, Australian and English divisions.”

⁷ G.H.Q. replied unofficially that the term “British troops” was understood and intended by it to include those of the Dominions. This was true, but G.H.Q. also knew that the term was constantly used by the overseas peoples and often in the British Army (for example in a current *communiqué* of Allenby’s) as meaning troops of the Motherland excluding those of the dominions. “Imperial troops” to an Australian then meant troops of the mother country. To-day “Empire troops” appears best to connote “British and oversea forces.” The double meaning of “British” has proved a constant embarrassment even in the writing of this history.

produced to half a dozen British leaders in succession his cherished illustration of the Australian as a "sportsman" who would therefore refuse to play unless his score was displayed on the board.⁸ The argument would have been detested by the best of his men but it brought the intended result: newspapers began to pay to the dominion forces an attention which helped Monash in his new method of appeal to his troops.⁹

That policy was assisted, from quite other motives, by the Australian Prime Minister. Mr. Hughes, being shown over the battlefield of Amiens by the senior Australian war correspondent, was astonished at the part now being played by Australian and Canadian troops. It appeared to him to be nothing less than, at the moment, a decisive factor—as indeed it was, though one of several. If he could only cause this to be widely realised the influence of the Dominions in the peace settlement would be greatly increased, and he therefore arranged that successive parties of leading British journalists and newspaper owners should be invited to the Australian sector, with complete freedom to see and enquire for themselves.¹⁰ This urge for publicity was fully consistent with Monash's policy for inspiring the A.I.F.

Mr. Hughes's policy, however, had a different object and brought him later into sharp conflict with Monash. In Australia there had been raised in May 1917 the difficult question of securing for Australian soldiers furlough not merely to England or France but to Australia.¹¹ When Mr. Hughes reached London in June 1918 and found Mr. Lloyd George deeply impressed with the need for conserving the British Army, Hughes was for the same reason equally concerned for the Australians. Like all other members of the Imperial War Cabinet he had been advised that the war would not end until 1919 or 1920. If the Australian forces were by then reduced to two or three divisions Australia would have a diminished influence in the peace negotiations. He was therefore deter-

⁸ See p. 200.

⁹ He noted it as "a complete change" (*War Letters*, p. 268).

¹⁰ The first party, led by Mr. Hughes himself, arrived on Sep. 12 and left on the 16th. It included Lord Burnham (owner of the *Daily Telegraph*), and Messrs. Thomas Marlowe (editor of *Daily Mail*) and Edward Price Bell (American Press). For the others see Vol. XI, pp. 750-51.

¹¹ For its origin see Vol. II, pp. 179-80, 409 and 745.

mined that the five infantry divisions must, if possible, be maintained. Accordingly, he applied to the A.I.F. a general recommendation of a committee of the Imperial War Cabinet,¹² and insisted that before Australian divisions were used in any important offensive he must be consulted.

But either this instruction was not passed to Haig, or Haig thought it too dangerous to be complied with; for Mr. Hughes did not hear of the committal of the whole Australian Corps in the great attack at Amiens until Sir Henry Wilson was actually describing that day's success to members of the Imperial War Cabinet. Wilson often told afterwards how the Australian Prime Minister was beginning to ask by whose authority the Corps was so used when he caught Wilson's next sentence, telling of the penetration of dominion troops through the enemy's line in the greatest Allied victory of the war, and any protest died away.

But Mr. Hughes was very much impressed by Australian soldiers on leave in London during those weeks telling him, "There'll be no A.I.F. if they don't rest us soon"; and he determined to bring about three steps: first, the granting of "home leave" for the original Anzacs—which till now the British authorities, fearing its probable extension to other troops¹³ and heavy demands on shipping, had declared to be out of the question; second, the withdrawal of the Australian infantry for rest when autumn began and when, as Mr. Hughes then believed, further attacks would be merely waste of men urgently needed for next year; and, third, the transfer of the Corps during the winter months to a milder climate to recoup its numbers. "The Australian divisions are being used as shock troops," he maintained. "If, then, the final effort is to be made in 1919, the right method is to conserve them."

He laid these proposals before Sir Henry Wilson. As to the first he was informed that the apparently insuperable difficulty was that of obtaining ships, whereupon he concentrated his effort upon securing them. As to the second, Wilson advised him to see Haig who might be able to arrange it. "I shall not see Haig or any one else," said Hughes. "If the Belgian Government wants its troops withdrawn from the line it does

¹² See Vol. V, p. 663 and Vol. XI, pp. 743-4.

¹³ e.g. New Zealanders; and also British soldiers in distant theatres.

not ask any one's leave. It simply says they are to be withdrawn." Monash, to whom he told his plans, demurred that the needs of the campaign might render it impossible to withdraw the Corps when the weather broke—at latest by October 15th—as Hughes insisted. The Prime Minister's reply was that the Corps must be out of the line by the date mentioned and that General Monash's position would depend upon this. There is evidence that Mr. Hughes at this time, though sure of the Australian Government's approval of his aims, was not always certain whether it would support his methods, and even feared that Monash by cabling to Australia might have him overruled. Nevertheless he accepted that chance. His only threat to Sir Henry Wilson was that he would not leave England until the Corps was at rest.

These problems were brewing in the Australian Corps when the Seventeenth, Second, and Eighteenth German Armies suddenly withdrew from their so-called "Winter Line" along the Somme and north of it, and Rawlinson ordered advanced guards to follow the enemy to the Hindenburg Line.¹⁴

Rawlinson had ordered his two corps to press the enemy vigorously so as to prevent roads and railways from being destroyed. This order, though undoubtedly wise, displeased Haig who did not wish to be forced into attacking the Hindenburg Line until Foch was ready with his American and French offensives elsewhere; then the blows would fall together. Haig therefore refused Rawlinson another division to bring relief to his tired troops—they must be rested by not pressing the pursuit. When the time for the combined stroke arrived, Haig would send several divisions to form a new corps, the IX, to relieve the right of the Australian.

However, in accordance with Rawlinson's order, Monash had already directed a vigorous pursuit with three divisions.¹⁵ He had now promised a good rest to the 2nd; and as the 1st and 4th, then resting, were being reserved for the next set battle (presumably at the Hindenburg Line) he was forced, in spite

¹⁴ On First Army's front the Germans had already lost this.

¹⁵ On Sep. 5, during one day's readjustment, he held his front with two—32nd and 5th. Rawlinson's order had been telegraphed at 10.45 p.m. on Sep. 4 and was repeated formally on the 5th.

of previous promises, to recall for a few days the weary 3rd. Each line-division was given a 5,000 yards' front, the 32nd south of the Roman road, the 5th and 3rd north of it.¹⁶ The advanced guards were:

| <i>3rd Division</i> | <i>5th Division</i> | <i>32nd Division</i> |
|--|--|---|
| 11th Bde. Group (with Sqn. 13th L.H., 42nd and 3rd Pion. Bns., and two artillery brigades—16th R.H.A. and 3rd A.F.A.—as vanguard.) | 8th Bde. Group (with Sqn. 13th L.H., 29th and 31st Bns., and four field-guns as vanguard.) | 97th Bde. Group (with Sqn. 13th L.H. and 161st Bde. R.F.A.) |

Cyclists also were attached. Gen. Gellibrand ensured vigorous work from the 3rd Divn.'s tired troops by sending each battalion into the line for only twenty-four hours.

In the 5th Division the 8th Brigade after continuously marching and fighting for 48 hours was called to what an officer described as "the heaviest and weariest work the battalions have done. C.O's (he added) could scarcely expect the battalions to do such work." When at 7 a.m. on the 6th they arrived from near Mont St. Quentin to pass through the 14th British Brigade (32nd Division) north of the Roman road, they were so obviously exhausted that the British divisional commander himself asked leave for his brigade to go on to the second of the objectives set (he was already on the first) and so allow the tired Australians a day's rest. Monash agreed and the 14th British Brigade reached their objective at 9.30 a.m. without fighting, as did the 97th south of the Roman road.

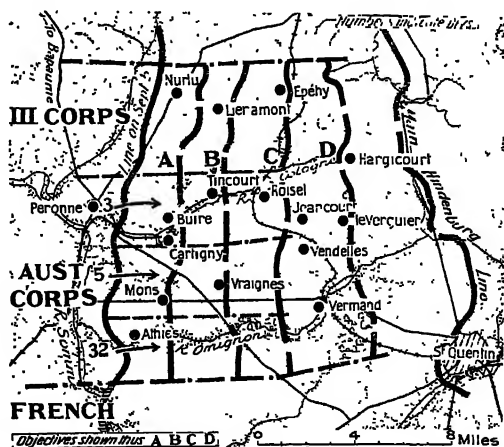
The advanced guard of the 3rd Division had a very different experience. Ahead of the Corps lay the rolling country through which two small tributaries of the Somme, the Cologne on the north flank and the Omignon on the south, flow down to the Somme marshes. Each river valley is wide, marshy, and tree covered, with villages strung at intervals along it. The higher land is rolling, and bare except for scattered woods and for villages whose tree-lined hedges and gardens give them the appearance of woods. Fourteen miles east of Péronne, where the Cologne and Omignon rise and the country then dips to

¹⁶ Monash's account (*Victories*, pp. 200-1, and map at p. 208) is inaccurate.

the sources of the Scheldt, lay the Hindenburg Line. Its main line lay beyond the watershed, generally behind the canal joining the sources of Somme and Scheldt, and its foremost line along the watershed about a mile west of the canal. The whole trench-system had lain abandoned since March, as had the successive British lines west of it, now a moorland of overgrown trenches and long dense belts of wire running for miles both across and along the ridges. It was uncertain upon which of five of the old lines—three British lines (reserve, main, and outpost) and the two first German ones (outpost and main line)—the Germans

would now make their stand; but Rawlinson's order for the pursuit laid down four objectives,¹⁷ at two or three miles intervals, two before

the trench area was reached, the third lying close to the old British reserve line and the fourth in the old British front area. Till the third and fourth were reached the advance would lie through untrenched country except for a line hurriedly dug and



improved by the Germans five miles east of Péronne, through Nurlu and Tincourt. This would be attained in the first and

¹⁷ Named the green, red, blue and brown lines.

second stages and it was hither that the Germans were believed to have retired as the first stage in their withdrawal.¹⁸

The advance towards the second objective on the morning of September 6th met, as already mentioned, no serious resistance in the two southern sectors of Australian Corps. In the northern sector at midnight on the 5th the head of the 11th Brigade passed through the 8th (which then withdrew southwards on its exhausting march to the next sector). Brig.-Genl. Cannan advanced with the 42nd Battalion on his left and the 3rd Pioneer on his right.¹⁹ The foremost troops, very widely extended, felt their way in the dark through unknown country across several abandoned wire-entanglements. No Germans were seen but their flares rose not far ahead. At 3 a.m. the Pioneers rested in a clover field near Cartigny and Buire (the first objective) waiting for dawn. Here the Cologne curved across the 3rd Division's front. The right company of the Pioneers crossed it at Buire and, when the advance was resumed at 4.30, just before dawn, the left trended north-eastwards over the hills north of the river. Presently in the misty light it was fired on by machine-guns in Buire Wood, which clothed the hill north of Tincourt.²⁰ The pioneers not being trained in "peaceful penetration," were uncertain how best to attack; they appeared to be well ahead of other troops, but they would not withdraw and decided to rush the post. In doing so 16 were hit, including Lieut. Broadbridge²¹ mortally wounded. They killed every German there except one²² and seized the hill. South of the stream the artillery shelled a German post near Cartigny, and the platoon of pioneers here pushed on for a mile until stopped by machine-guns. Capt. Toone²³ was killed directing his men. Into the gap at the Cologne stream Lieut.-

¹⁸ No time-table was laid down for the British advance but the intention apparently was to reach the first objective by the night of Sep. 5; pass through it at dawn on the 6th and reach the second by nightfall; reach the third, if possible, during the night of the 6th; rest there during the 7th and relieve some of the troops; and then at dawn on the 8th attempt to advance, as far as was possible by patrolling methods, through the zone of the old British defences.

¹⁹ A detached company of the 42nd formed the extreme right.

²⁰ *Vol. XII, plates 547-8* shows the scene when the mist rose.

²¹ Lt. N. L. Broadbridge, 3rd Pion. Bn. Clerk; of East Malvern, Vic.; b. Caulfield, Vic., 22 Nov. 1892. Died of wounds, 7 Sep. 1918.

²² A youth who fled, hands high, to the Australian rear.

²³ Capt. J. A. E. Toone, 3rd Pion. Bn. Architect; of Melbourne; b. Grantham, Lincs., Eng., 18 Sep. 1883. Killed in action, 6 Sep. 1918.

Col. Sanday²⁴ put a reserve company, which then worked through the trees south of Tincourt. But the 8th Brigade on the right was far behind and was not coming up.²⁵ Sanday therefore drew back his right for a mile. At 3 p.m. pillars of smoke rose from Tincourt; explosions blew up the roads; and Germans withdrew from there and Boucly, and many small copses. The 42nd and the left of the pioneers advanced unopposed to Tincourt²⁶ and the second objective beyond; the right stayed back waiting for the 8th Brigade to move.

German records show that in this retirement von Boehn's Army Group was to deceive its opponents as long as possible by strong rearguard action, retiring to the Hindenburg Line only if firmly attacked. The reason was that Ludendorff required time to rest his other forces and move reserves, a transfer of Allied forces towards the Meuse area having been noticed. On the night of Sep. 3 Boehn had withdrawn his main force to the Tincourt line, and on that of the 5th to the Epéhy line—that is, the old British main line of the previous March. The country was (for the second time) to be devastated, houses, roads and railways to be destroyed. The posts met by the 3rd Pioneer were those of the II/258th R.I.R. acting as rearguard of the 185th Divn.

That night the horizon ahead of Fourth Army was lurid with burning villages. The 3rd Pioneer and 42nd were withdrawn.²⁷ At daylight the advanced guards moved on again, 8th Brigade in the centre passing through the 14th British. Again the two southern columns reached their objective with slight resistance; light horse and cyclist patrols scouted ahead, advanced companies of infantry with an allotment of field-guns, Vickers machine-guns, and trench-mortars followed. The light horse located posts of the German rearguard, the guns shelled them, infantry patrols worked round them. At Vraignes, two miles from the objective, the troops obviously came within long range of the new German artillery positions; but by 8 a.m. the 8th Brigade (29th and 31st Battalions) had posts in old trenches past the third objective, and light horse and cyclist patrols could presently be seen two miles ahead, well beyond the nearest German posts. One patrol dismounted and crossed the St. Quentin-Cambrai railway close behind which lay the old British reserve

²⁴ Lt.-Col. W. H. Sanday, D.S.O., M.C. Commanded 3rd Pion. Bn., 1918-19. Civil engineer; of Middlesex, Eng., and Melbourne; b. 6 Sep. 1878.

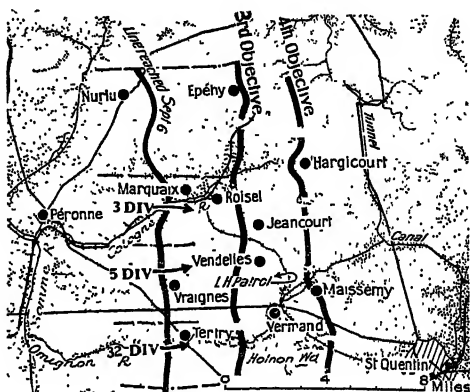
²⁵ Through bad *liaison* the pioneers knew nothing of the 14th British Bde.'s generous advance.

²⁶ The scene this afternoon is shown in *plates 457-8, Vol. XII.*

²⁷ The pioneers began at once a course of infantry training.

line. Machine-guns fired from Vermand, beside the Omignon, terminus of the long Roman road, and from which other Roman roads or traces of them radiated to St. Quentin, le Cateau, and sites of forgotten Roman forts. On the 3rd Division's front the left battalion,

41st, was stopped at about half its way along the Cologne valley by machine-guns and field-guns firing point blank from Roisel. The British and Australian guns there-upon shelled this so persistently that the 41st had to pass it, the Germans then re-



tiring and abandoning 10 machine-guns, 60 waggons, and 2 guns. The enemy now fought a steady rearguard action, the advanced companies of the 44th and 41st having to outflank one machine-gun post after another. The 44th pushed past Hervilly and by dusk on the 7th the third objective was fully occupied.

The region confronting the advanced guards was now crossed at wide intervals by the trench-systems and wire belts of last year's front; the immediate task was to discover at which of these the Germans intended to stand. To the eye, despite the trench-lines and wandering switches and entanglements, the landscape was little changed.²⁸ Grass or self-sown crops stood high; the copses and occasional hedges or avenues had not been shattered like those of the Somme and Ypres. The apparently endless belts of old British wire had been cut through to make passages for German transport. In the old British area the entanglements were mostly on the wrong side of the trenches for the Germans, and were a serious obstacle only when toughly defended. Except for these the fields, woods and roads close ahead of the troops were prac-

²⁸ Plate 549, Vol. XII shows a pioneer battalion approaching this area.

tically untouched, though the villages had been shelled and burnt and were generally avoided.

At the third objective, owing to Haig's order that the troops must be rested, Monash directed the Corps to halt. While patrols tried to discover without serious fighting where the Germans intended to give battle, the divisions were to bring up their infantry and artillery, organise their supply and communications, and prepare for another set-piece. It was already clear that on the first trench-line, the old British reserve position near Vendelles and Hesbécourt, von Boehn was maintaining only a screen; but he might stand at any of the next three. The British artillery would get into position to attack the second, the old British main line. On September 10th the 1st and 4th Divisions, already coming up by 'buses from the Amiens battlefield, would take over the front, each with one brigade ready to continue the advance.

Meanwhile on September 8th the weather, hitherto fine, had broken, but the brigades in line—8th and 10th (the latter having relieved the 11th)—had probed ahead with patrols and found the enemy posts stronger than before.²⁹ On the southern flank patrols reached Vermand³⁰ but the enemy was found to be holding Vendelles, Hesbécourt and the old British reserve line area beyond them. During this day and night and the next the front line companies, still helped by light horse and cyclists, closed up for about a mile³¹ to beyond Hesbécourt and near Vendelles and Jeancourt. North of the Cologne the 74th Division, still in the line, tried to go deeper but failed. This was the position when on the evening of September 10th infantry of the 4th and 1st Divisions moved up to the line.

At a conference on September 9th Monash told the divisional commanders, MacLagan and Glasgow, that probably the old main British line, two miles ahead up the spurs at le Verguier and near Hargicourt, was strongly held and would have to be attacked in a "set

²⁹ Capt. Towl, 37th Bn., was here mortally wounded by German shelling.

³⁰ Sgt. R. H. Tuff (Caulfield, Vic.), 13th L.H. reached the Mound there. Under Lt. E. C. Knowles (Brisbane), 31st, parties went completely round Vermand, returning through it; they were fired on from the heights south of the river. Lts. A. E. Hynes (Ballarat, Vic.), 31st Bn., and L. A. Deegan (Camberwell, Vic.), 13th L. H., reconnoitred the railway farther north.

³¹ The 3rd Div. now had the 37th, 39th and 40th Bns. in line.

battle," but that it was thought that up to that line the ground was lightly held and might be penetrated by energetic patrols. On September 8th Haig had asked his army commanders for a report as to the enemy's position and condition, and what he seemed likely to do, and to submit proposals for the next set-piece attack. Foch had told Haig that he proposed to launch a great French and American offensive later in the month, but was having great difficulty in getting the American commander, Pershing, to complete his preparations in time. Haig had criticised the original plan for this offensive by which the Americans would have launched a separate, divergent thrust, and had urged that all strokes should be concentric against the German communications. Foch adopted this plan and asked that the British should co-operate in this vast offensive by a thrust in combination with the Belgians in Flanders as well as the coming stroke on the Hindenburg front. Haig's present question to his army commanders was a preliminary to planning these attacks. General Byng of the Third Army replied that the Germans were obviously fighting for time to rest their troops and would make their main stand at the Hindenburg Line which should be attacked before the position crystallised and the Germans were rested. Rawlinson's answer was similar but expressed uncertainty as to the line on which the Germans would stand. If the Germans were given time to rest, their morale would quickly recover,³² and a frontal attack on the very strong fortifications of this sector of the Hindenburg Line might not be advisable. Rawlinson therefore proposed, as a preliminary operation, to "hustle" the Germans from the old British line. In doing this he would discover the state of their morale, and could then decide whether he could wisely attack the Hindenburg Line. His army was at last being reinforced and would be organised from September 11th into three corps—IX, Australian and III. The troops, Rawlinson said, needed a rest³³ but should be rested after, not before, they had thrust to within striking distance of the Hindenburg Line. Meanwhile he begged strongly for permission to make the preliminary attack.

³² As that of the British had done in April.

³³ This related to the divisions of III and Australian Corps. The IX Corps would comprise comparatively fresh divisions, 1st, 6th and 46th. The 32nd was to be relieved.

By Monash's order the 4th and 1st Divisions began their task at once by "peaceful penetration." On the afternoon of September 10th the two forward battalions of the 1st Brigade which that night was to take over the front west of Jeancourt and east of Hesbécourt, found a line of German posts across the two knuckles leading west from Hargicourt, Villeret and le Verguier. At dusk fighting patrols were sent to cut out these posts. The patrols of the 4th Battalion east of Hesbécourt (where the old British reserve line was already taken) drove back the German posts but found themselves in turn nearly cut off by the garrison of one post which worked round through a switch line to their rear. The patrols returned to report that the position could not be taken without artillery. Farther south, however, patrols of the 2nd Battalion operating on either side of Jeancourt, where the old reserve system had not yet been captured, were able to work up the trenches north and south of the village. Jeancourt was empty, but on one of its roads in the dark a patrol found a force of Germans marching in fours and poured in Lewis gun fire at short range.



The Germans were a party of the 81st I.R. (21st Divn.) sent up at the request of Capt. Gross (87th I.R.) commander of the local outposts to salve some medical material. Gross had no notion that the Australians had penetrated here and (says the history of the 87th) the party suffered very heavy loss. An Australian patrol afterwards found 20 German rifles dropped in the road there.

The 4th Battalion decided to resume its attack up the spur south of the Cologne at dawn, 5.30 a.m., covered by a barrage from the supporting artillery. This barrage was thin and the German post fought, but the patrols of the two attacking com-

panies together with parties of machine-gunners outflanked it and other posts on Hill 140 south of Templeux-le-Guérard; the Germans fled and Australian posts were formed on the eastern slope of the hill. Here, however, as they dug and the mist cleared, they were fired on by machine-guns at Templeux just below them, and by field-guns both at Hargicourt, a mile farther up the valley, and in the extensive quarries with which the slopes between those villages were scored. In the two platoons on the hill both the officers and most of the men were killed, wounded, or gassed. The posts were withdrawn to the rear of the hill, and at 11 a.m. the Germans laid down a heavy bombardment and attacked, retaking Hill 140 and capturing ten of the 4th who had sheltered from the shelling in a sunken road and were not informed of the withdrawal. On regaining the summit the Germans also fired into the posts established by the right company of the 4th across the valley south of the knoll. The 4th was driven back to its starting point with a loss of 5 officers and 98 men.³⁴

The patrolling platoons of the 2nd Battalion also resumed the attack; at noon, with the help of guns, Stokes mortars, rifle-grenades and machine-guns, they cleared two German posts from the trenches south of Jeancourt³⁵ and carried the front slightly beyond the trench-line.

Farther south the 4th Division, taking over the 5th Division's front which was much more distant from the old defence lines, advanced in the early afternoon 2,000 yards driving back the few posts left to watch its movements. This brought the outposts of the 4th Division on to the south-western side of a valley along whose north-eastern side the old British reserve line lay. Here on September 12th the two forward battalions, 51st and 50th (13th Brigade), met fairly strong resistance. But the thrust of the 1st Division on the previous day and of the

³⁴ Lts. K. Beale, A. L. Malone, T. J. Perkins, H. Dean and J. C. Brennan were wounded. The left company lost all its N.C.O's and three-quarters of its men.

³⁵ Lt. H. W. Parle (Darlinghurst, N.S.W.), reconnoitring up the old works had found himself face to face with a German officer looking over a barricade. Parle fired first and then slipped back and arranged an attack. After a ten minutes' "crash" by artillery and 40 Stokes mortar shells the post was rushed from the front and 15 prisoners of the 87th I.R. taken. Sgt. G. Dransfield (Strathfield, N.S.W.) attacked the other post, firing a Lewis gun from the hip. On reaching it he was badly wounded by distant machine-gun fire from le Verguier way, but 7 Germans were captured and 8 killed. Jeancourt was left empty but Sgt. A. H. Buckeridge (Camperdown, N.S.W.) had pushed out a post north of it. Lt. E. H. Comerford (Christchurch, N.Z.) was wounded.

74th British Division farther north on September 10th had already given Monash and Rawlinson the desired indication—that the Second German Army intended to fight on the old British main line through Epéhy, Hargicourt and le Verguier.

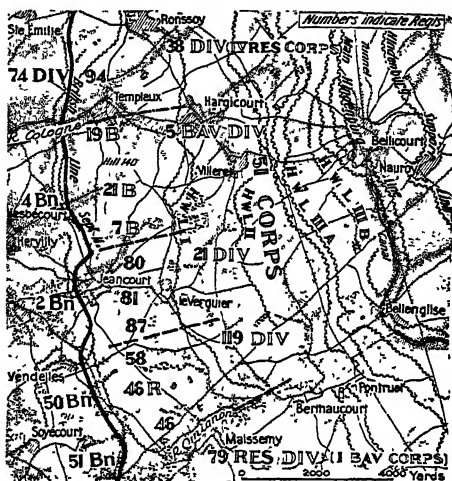
It is now known that this was correct—the German command had laid down that the "Siegfried Line," which was to be held, now included the old British defences.

The Second Army's new battle zone comprised all the trench-systems west of the Canal. The forward zone at first reached to the old British reserve line, including Jean-court. The H.W.L. (main line of resistance) was the old British main line at Epéhy, Hargicourt and le Verguier. The reserve lines were the old British outpost-line known as H.W.L. 2, the old German outpost-line H.W.L. 3 (A), and the further line half way down to the Canal H.W.L. 3 (B). The old main German line, east of the Canal and over the Bellicourt tunnel, and the

successive Nauroy and Beaufevor lines behind this, were to be held (where at all) only by emergency garrisons. On an order to "stand to" the counter-attack divisions were to be brought up to H.W.L. 3, which would also have security garrisons of engineers, grooms and batman.

It was into the forward zone that the Australians thrust on Sep. 10-11. An order of the 21st Divn. says that this zone was to be toughly held, so as to give time for the construction of the le Verguier line (H.W.L.) for permanent occupation. As there was no natural obstacle for tanks, mines were to be laid in the forward zone,³⁶ and "forts" were to be constructed in the H.W.L., each containing two field-guns, machine-guns with armour-piercing ammunition, trench-mortars and searchlights. Attack was expected, but prisoners were required in order to ascertain the British intention; the troops were told that, if patrols could not catch prisoners, raids would have to be made.

The 1st and 4th Australian Divisions were now faced almost exactly by the 51st Army Corps, with the 5th Bavarian, 21st and 119th Divns. in that order from north to south.³⁷ On Sep. 11 opposite the 4th Aust. Divn. the 46th I.R. (119th Divn.) tried to get prisoners but failed. The 87th I.R. was to raid on the night of the 10th but was



³⁶ Actually there was too little time to carry this out properly.

³⁷ The 38th German Div. was now north of the Aust. Corps sector.

caught by the advance of the 2nd Bn. and of the flank of the 50th as were the 81st and 80th I.R. at Jeancourt. The Australian attack farther north fell on pickets of the three regiments of the 5th Bav. Divn. It was the III/19th Bav. I.R. that fought that night on Hill 140. At 5 a.m. on the 11th it made its attempt to raid, but was driven off the hill by the 4th Bn.'s attack. This it eventually stopped by flanking fire, and at noon half of the II and III Bns. retook the hill and captured prisoners. Farther south the pickets of the 21st and 7th Bav. I.R. had been driven back, but after the counter-attack they regained the ground.³⁸ That night, however, the German pickets were withdrawn 400-800 yards.

Although Monash and Rawlinson could not know how the trench-systems ahead were held, they now realised that further approach to the main Hindenburg defence line **The plan** could be made only by formal attack. The southern sector of Monash's front, held by the 32nd Division, was on September 11th taken over by the IX Corps under Lieut.-General Braithwaite (formerly Hamilton's chief-of-staff at the Dardanelles); and on September 12th Rawlinson at a conference with his three corps commanders³⁹ "over a cup of tea" at Monash's headquarters⁴⁰ planned the preliminary battle by which the British front would be brought within attacking distance of the main Hindenburg Line. Haig gave his consent to the project next day (13th) and ordered it to be carried out as soon as possible. That day both Rawlinson and Monash issued their orders and Monash held a conference with the commanders and staffs concerned. For the starting point he fixed a straight line ahead of the positions yet reached, confident that his line battalions would reach it (as he now ordered them to do) before the day of attack, probably September 18th. His artillery was thus able to take up immediately its positions for the battle and dump its ammunition.

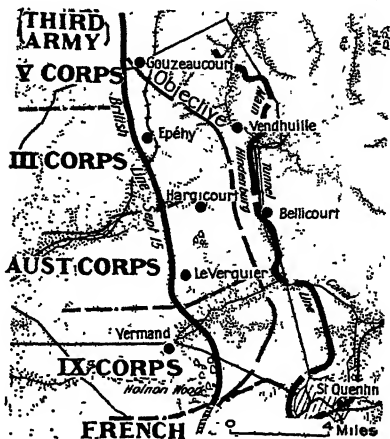
By patrol fighting, sometimes difficult, in showery weather

³⁸ The historian of the 21st guesses rightly that "the Australians were making a reconnaissance in force." The history of the 7th B.I.R. says that it captured a man of the 4th Bn. with "dum dum" bullets in his pouch and that medical officers reported that severe wounds this day were due to the use of these. No such bullets, of course, had been issued to the troops. Some man with a special hatred of his enemy may have scraped the noses of his bullets, causing them to burst on impact; this was done occasionally in all armies.

³⁹ Gen. Butler (III Corps) had returned. Maj.-Gen. E. P. Strickland, 1st Brit. Div., had been temporarily commanding the IX Corps (6th, 1st and 32nd Divs.) but Braithwaite had now arrived.

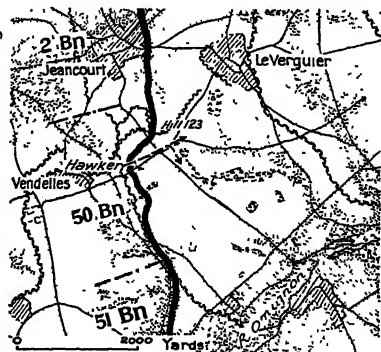
⁴⁰ In the old German corps headquarters near Belloy-en-Santerre. Aust. Corps H.Q. had moved on Aug. 13 from Bertangles to Glisy, on Aug. 31 to Méricourt Château, and on Sep. 11 to Belloy. Army H.Q. first followed it to Bertangles and later moved to Eterpigny. The words quoted are Monash's.

the Australian forward battalions stole the ground on which the start-line was to be laid.⁴¹ South of the Omignon the British took Holnon Wood on the 12th and on the 17th were reported to have secured Holnon village, three miles from St. Quentin. Orders had then been issued for a set attack on September 18th by the whole Fourth Army together with the extreme left of the First French Army and the right corps of the Third British Army. The total front of attack would be 17 miles, from Holnon to Gouzeaucourt. Fourth Army's attack would have a 20,000 yards' front as shown in the marginal sketch, the Australian Corps occupying the central third and



⁴¹ The 51st and 50th (13th Bde.) holding the 4th Div.'s front had some awkward tasks. The 51st Bn. with its right on the Omignon river, advanced its forward companies on the afternoon and evening of the 12th under heavy fire from German posts on both sides of the river, taking 8 prisoners. Next morning a German post was found within the new front and a patrol attacked it frontally from a sunken road, shooting 3 Germans and capturing without loss 2 officers and 44 men. (This was the right flank group of the forward zone garrison of the 58th I.R., 119th Div. The Australians had penetrated between it and the 87th I.R., 21st Div., unnoticed. The company commander barely escaped. A counter-attack being ordered was made by 6 N.C.O.'s and 6 men, but the Australian fire beat it off.)

Farther north, in the 50th Bn.'s sector Lt. A. S. Hawker ("Marola" Yacka, S.A.)—brother of the famous airman—reconnoitring with his platoon preparatory to an advance, heard voices and ran into a German post which, evidently awaiting relief, asked "Are you the 7th Company?" Hawker answered "Ja!" and ordered his men to fire. Just then the real relief came up behind him. Sgt. F. H. Horley (Adelaide), whom he had sent to reconnoitre ahead, also ran into Germans, and the platoons withdrew, fighting enemy parties on all sides of them. The information brought back by these leaders and Cpl. F. Wood (Adelaide) greatly helped the advance by the companies at dawn to the starting line. Forty prisoners and 8 machine-guns were captured. The Germans counter-attacked feebly in the morning but strongly at dusk, when they captured one post beside a wood on "Spur 123" leading to le Verguier, and 4 prisoners. (The outpost-line probed by Hawker on



attacking with its 4th and 1st Divisions each on a 3,500 yards' front.

In this region the German staff who sited the Hindenburg Line in 1916 had drawn it so as to be protected by the St. Quentin Canal which ran, largely through a deep cutting, from the Somme at St. Quentin to the Scheldt between le Catelet and Vendhuille. The main line thus lay behind the canal cutting, protruding only at two places where the canal passed through tunnels—a short one at le Tronquoy, three miles north of St. Quentin (on the IX Corps front) and a long one at Bellicourt five miles farther north (mainly on the III Corps front). At those places the line was strengthened by additional trenches and wire. With the two lines farther back this chapter is not concerned; but in front of the main line its first designers had sited an outpost-line running along the watershed about a mile west of the canal and its tunnels, the object being to screen the main line from observation. The main line was thus generally lower than the front. This accorded with the principle favoured in 1915, of siting defences on a reverse slope, but when opinion swung back to the earlier method the adequacy of these defences was strongly questioned by some of the German staff, and the outpost system was strengthened until it became a main position. Full details of the scheme for the sector opposite Fourth Army's right, together with maps and the particulars of this controversy, had been captured by Lieut. Rollings at Framerville. It was realised that the ideas embodied in these voluminous records were largely out of date, and the defences would now probably be

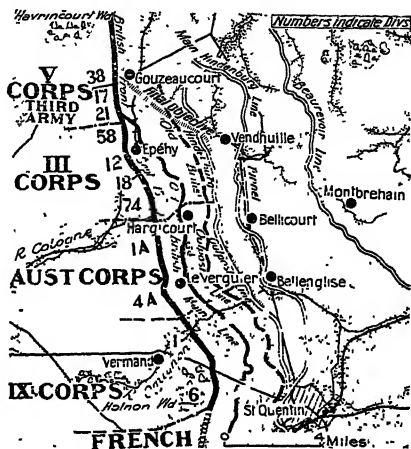
Sep. 12 was held by the 87th I.R. and had been reinforced in consequence of a bombing attack made by the 50th along an old sap during the afternoon. The Germans had been vainly trying to secure prisoners by patrolling and an N.C.O. who brought in the dead body of one of Hawker's men was rewarded with 250 marks—nominally £12 10s.—a similar sum being distributed to his party. That night the 21st Div. was relieved by the 1st Res. The 3rd Coy. of the 59th R.I.R. lost the hill at dawn, but recaptured it after a strong bombardment as the position was "to be held at all costs."

The line on this flank was finally advanced to the start-line on the afternoon of Sep. 15, when the 51st Bn. attacked together with the 2nd Welch (1st Brit. Div.), the IX Corps boundary having been shifted to 1,000 yards north of the Omignon. The 51st took a few prisoners, machine-guns and trench-mortars at a cost of 28 casualties. The 49th (then facing Hill 123), hearing of this advance, seized the opportunity for clearing the Germans from that hill. One platoon under Lt. M. J. McCabe (Brisbane) helped by Stokes mortars captured 22 men of the 58th I.R. (19th Div.), whose history says that only 20 of 85 men of its 1st and 3rd Coys. escaped. Its forward zone garrison had vanished, and the zone had to be re-established farther back as had that of the 2nd Coy. of the 59th R.I.R. (1st Res. Div.), which was thrust by the 49th from the hill leaving 8 more prisoners and 9 machine-guns.

held differently, but the information was nevertheless highly valuable.

The Hindenburg "Outpost"-Line—to give it the name still used, though recognised in British orders as an incorrect description—ran generally a mile west of the Hindenburg Main Line and a mile east of the old British outpost-line except opposite the Bellicourt end of the tunnel where, in the heavy local fighting in 1917, the British outpost-line had been thrust forward into the German and for a mile the two systems keyed with one another. The old British main line lay from half a mile to a mile west of the British outpost-line; and the position from which the Australian Corps would start lay from 1,000 to 3,000 yards west of this again. The 1st Australian Division, which was farthest from it, would attack up the long even spurs to the Cologne-Scheldt watershed, while the 4th would cross successive valleys running south to the Omignon. The army and corps commanders decided to make the British main line the first objective and the British outpost-line the second. The first would be attacked under a normal creeping barrage and, by arranging for a pause in which to advance the field artillery, the second could be attacked by the same method. But it was also decided to attempt to take advantage of any temporary shock to the Germans by trying to secure the Hindenburg Outpost-Line as well. This was accordingly made a third objective, to be reached by exploitation.⁴²

The detailed arrangements generally followed those for



The hachured line shows the final objective.

⁴² The objectives were termed the green, red, and blue lines.

Hamel. The Corps had already thirteen brigades of field artillery and two were now added. This would give a normally dense barrage, and ten per cent. of smoke shell would provide a thick screen.⁴³ As usual the Australians pressed for a slightly earlier start and quicker pace than were eventually arranged; and they urged that the pause at the first objective should not be longer than an hour. This could not be arranged; owing to the needs of their neighbours the 4th Division had to pause for two hours and part of the 1st for an hour and a quarter. The Australians arranged to push on with exploitation as soon as the barrage ceased, fifteen minutes after reaching the second objective; but, owing to the requirement of troops farther south, the 1st British Division, on the Australian right, would not begin to exploit till nearly two hours later.

A few tanks would assist, but only 20 for the whole army. They were parcelled out, 8 each to Australian and III Corps, and 4 to IX Corps. Each Australian division was given 4, but only on the 1st Australian Division's front, where stiff fighting was expected in the complex of trenches around Cologne Farm, were they to go beyond the first objective. This time they would advance behind the infantry and be used in capturing particular strong-points. But to instil the fear caused by the mere appearance of tanks, a number of dummy ones were to be made with wooden frames covered by painted hessian. These would be taken before zero hour to high ground near the start-line and would thence be moved a little distance by pioneers with long drag-ropes or other means to points where the Germans after dawn would see them. A new feature of the plans was Monash's adding another division's machine-guns to each attacking division, so that the machine-gun barrage in the first two stages would be specially dense. After the second objective was taken two field artillery brigades would advance into the territory captured by each division and help the exploiting infantry.

"The fight is a normal advance with a normal limited objective, a very simple form of advance," said Monash the day before. Nevertheless, both he and others thought that the third stage—an attempt to seize the powerful Siegfried defences by

⁴³ Smoke bombs were also dropped from the air but this time proved confusing. The dropping of ammunition from aeroplanes was prevented by a storm which wrecked many hangars and damaged 40 machines on the night of the 16th.

"exploitation," involving on his right the crossing of an open valley a mile wide—furnished a task probably beyond the power of the troops. Aeroplane photographs of that system showed that belts of immensely strong wire protecting it were uncut, and Monash, at his final conference on the 16th, reminded the divisional commanders that the "blue line," as it was called,

is a line for exploitation only. It is not to be considered as a definite objective of the attack. Exploitation is to be undertaken in order to take advantage of the demoralisation of the enemy which usually ensues after an attack. It is not intended that a large body of troops should be detailed to capture this line.

He issued this as a supplementary order. The object in this phase was to obtain observation down the gullies leading to Bellicourt and the area round it. He told the official war correspondent:

the divisions are to make an honest and sincere attempt to capture the Blue Line by allocating to its capture certain bodies of troops. But if those bodies fail they are not to throw in any other bodies of troops. . . . The wire on that line has not been successfully cut. We may find behind this wire fresh, rested troops.

The attacking divisions expected that in the main Hindenburg Line, farther back still, the Germans would have at least emergency garrisons and a large force of artillery. The German gunners would know the battlefield and the attacking troops after reaching the second objective would probably be very severely shelled. "It is an extensive, ambitious, plan for troops as worn as these," noted the official correspondent. The commander of the adjoining brigade of the 74th British Division, who knew the old British lines, anticipated difficulties at many points. His neighbour, Brig.-Genl. Iven Mackay of the 1st Australian Brigade said that the prospect of this fight gave him greater anxiety than that of any other in 1918.

Monash's preparations were affected by another acute anxiety when on September 12th there arrived from Birdwood (still administrative commander of the A.I.F.) a telephone message stating that shipping had been found by the British Government⁴⁴ for the first batch of 1914 men to go on leave to

⁴⁴ The procuring of the ships was due entirely to the persistence of Mr. Hughes. When once they had been obtained, the shipping arrangements were made by the Australian transport department in London under Commander C. A. Parker (East Kew, Vic.).

Australia, and 60 officers and 740 men were to be embarked at once.⁴⁵ The notice given to Birdwood was so short that he could not arrange for the men to obtain fresh clothing from England; they must sail in what clothes they had and would be re clothed in Egypt *en route*. As leave was to be given only to men who left Australia in 1914 the great majority would necessarily come from the 1st and 4th Divisions.⁴⁶ But these were the two that were going into action, and the message shocked General Monash, who immediately telegraphed through his D.A. and Q.M.G. (Brig.-Genl. Carruthers) that it was "quite impossible in inadequate time to provide quota for embarkation." Birdwood replied:

I feel it would be wrong to miss this opportunity and allow the ship to sail empty. Because a large number of deserving men cannot take this opportunity is no reason why others should be prevented.

He suggested that men not required in the coming action could go in the first batch, and the others later. Monash gave way and the full contingent was sent, including 260 from the 1st Division and 192 from the 4th.⁴⁷ Now came news that a second ship would be available immediately after the fight.

In the optimism of the moment all these troubles were easily shed. The III Corps had been excessively worked, but put in nearly all its infantry. The 4th Australian Division was fairly rested but its attacking battalions averaged now only 19 officers and 405 men (including headquarters) actually in the trenches, and those of the 1st Division only 18 officers and 339 men. Most of the battalions had reorganised themselves with three companies instead of four and with only three platoons in each company. The four Australian brigades, two from each division, that were to attack—driving as deep as 6,000 yards through these very strong defences on a 7,000-yard front—would have only 277 officers and 5,545 men in action. A minor anxiety was added at the last minute. Shortly before dusk on

⁴⁵ They would receive two months' leave in Australia. Men with wives in Australia received preference.

⁴⁶ All infantry brigades from the 1st Div. and one in the 4th had left Australia in 1914. The other two brigades of the 4th were formed from part of the original brigades. The 5th Div. had two brigades so formed. The artillery, medical, engineer and transport units contained a number of "original" troops, and the infantry of the 2nd and 3rd Divs. a sprinkling of them.

⁴⁷ Mr. Hughes addressed them on Sep. 14 before they entrained.



45. THE SCENE EAST OF PÉRONNE, 5TH SEPTEMBER, 1918

Bussu and other places burning. Across the middle distance the road from Mont St. Quentin runs past St. Denis towards Péronne. Beyond it can be seen the Aizcourt road, enclosing part of the "Triangle".

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E3218.

To face p. 896.



46. A PLATOON OF THE 45TH BATTALION REACHES ITS OBJECTIVE, 19TH SEPTEMBER, 1918
The Lewis Gunner is sniping at Germans who were retiring up the other side of the next valley,
above which lay the Hindenburg Outpost-Line.

September 17th one of the keenest officers of the force, Lieut.-Col. Marsden,⁴⁸ commanding the 5th Machine-Gun Battalion, when out south-west of le Verguier to check the safety angle for his guns,⁴⁹ strayed past a German post and was seized from behind while studying a map with the objective marked on it. He tried to escape, knocking down one of his escort, but could not get clear.

The troops were in bounding spirits. Yet among the staffs in rear, when at 3 a.m. on the 18th they were wakened by showers of rain swishing down the iron roofs of their huts, many hearts sank. The attacking companies must then be on their way to the start or lying out, wet through, before advancing over the heavy ground. Such conditions had wrecked offensives in the previous autumn, and as the rain continued with hardly a pause till after daylight, chance of success seemed to be vanishing. Miles ahead most of the attack battalions had had five or six miles to march to the start-line. The majority started at midnight and had a hot breakfast and a tot of rum during a halt at one of the villages about the time when the rain began. The 10th Battalion had been marched by Neligan to Jeancourt early in the night and "put to bed early" in some old huts at the front line. Neligan took the risk of shelling, and one shell did burst in a hut killing Capt. Young,⁵⁰ the medical officer, Lieut. White,⁵¹ and some others; but after a sleep and breakfast in the huts the 10th started fresh and eager. Others trudged wet through with rain and with the sweat of the heavy march. The dark was intense but the tracks had been admirably staked.

The barrage, which came down at 5.20, seemed to many the densest they had known. This was due partly to the sound of 200 machine-guns ripping out with a single roar, and partly to the sight of the smoke shell, easy to detect even in the dawn

⁴⁸ Lt.-Col. T. R. Marsden, D.S.O. Commanded 5th M.G. Bn., 1918; afterwards wing commander in R.A.A.F. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Randwick, N.S.W.; b. Kent, Eng., 13 Aug. 1887.

⁴⁹ He had been told that the front line had been advanced 300 yards.

⁵⁰ Capt. R. P. Young, A.A.M.C., Medical practitioner; of Cavendish, Vic.; b. Cavendish, 29 Dec. 1889. Killed in action, 18 Sep. 1918.

⁵¹ Lt. A. D. H. White, 10th Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Unley, S.A.; b. Brown's, near Scarsdale, Vic., 12 Feb. 1885. Killed in action, 18 Sept. 1918.

mist now rising.⁵² The showers were dying out and the mist, though thickened to great density by the smoke shells, seemed to promise a fair autumn day. The 1st Division knew it had a long approach to the old British main line. The troops pressed into the dark mist in their little section columns, guided partly by the sound of the shells and the direction of the ridges—which they were to follow, avoiding the valleys—partly by the compasses of their officers, some of whom had been given the sole duty of keeping direction. The scouts of each unit kept touch admirably on the flanks. Everyone wondered how soon they would stumble on Germans. As was now general with Australians, all had been closely instructed in the plans and lie of the ground,⁵³ and even the N.C.O.'s had paper maps which were useful though gradually pulped by the rain.

The 12th Battalion had barely started from the old line east of Jeancourt when in passing through an entanglement Lieut. Brian Butler⁵⁴ of the 12th and five of his men were suddenly killed by a German machine-gun firing from a small wood ahead; the gun was evidently trained upon a gap in the wire. But the general advance was nowhere held up; the fog was so thick that parties on the flanks easily worked round the German outposts. Apart from sounds, flashes were at first the only sign each side saw of the other, and each blazed at them. As the light grew vague figures were sometimes dimly seen. The Australians always came at them when possible from the rear. Often a group of German helmets in some hole a few yards away was the first actual sight of the enemy.

⁵² The infantry's start-line had been withdrawn 200 yards behind that originally planned. The field artillery barrage fell 200 yards ahead of it for 3 minutes, made two quick steps each of 100 yards in 2 minutes, and then went at the rate of 100 in 3 to the first objective and thence (after the halt) at 100 in 4 to the second. Beyond this it lay for 15 minutes. The machine-gun barrage was laid in several successive belts ahead of the artillery barrage, and its concentration was described by German officers afterwards as "frightful".

The field artillery comprised:—

4th DIVISION (7 F.A. bdes. under Br.-Gen. Burgess): *Right Group*—10th and 11th Bdes. under Col. T. I. C. Williams; *Left Group*—6th and 12th Bdes. under Lt.-Col. H. E. Cohen; *Superimposed Group*—13th and 14th A.F.A. Bdes. and 232nd Army Bde., R.F.A. under Lt.-Col. H. O. Caddy. 1st DIVISION (8 F.A. bdes. under Br.-Gen. Anderson): *Rt. Gp.*—1st, 2nd, 7th and 8th Bdes. under Lt.-Col. E. T. Dean; *Left Gp.*—3rd (Army), 5th (Army R.F.A.), 4th and 5th Bdes. under Lt.-Col. G. I. Stevenson.

⁵³ The 3rd Bde. had carried out practices over similar ground. The 9th Bn. had been lectured by Col. Mullen in front of a raised map; others had made similar preparations.

⁵⁴ Lt. B. N. Butler, 12th Bn., Bank clerk; of Hobart; b. Hobart, 29 June 1892. Killed in action, 18 Sept. 1918.

The formation used depended on the local obstacles. Taking the troops (shown in the marginal sketch) from the north southwards, the 1st Brigade (1st Divn.), attacking south of the Cologne with the 74th Division on the northern side of the valley, employed two battalions in the first phase, with two following behind to carry out the second and third. The scouts moved in pairs, 150 yards ahead, the companies in lines of sections following. On the left, the 4th Battalion's tank duly came out of the fog behind the line, but then lost its way in the fog again. The 140 Knoll had been abandoned by the Germans but the right battalion, 2nd, came on a post where



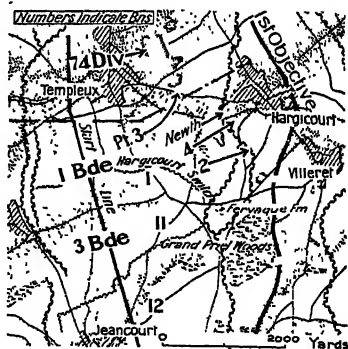
Hargicourt Switch wandered up the hill. It had been thought that Templeux-le-Guérard in the Cologne valley might prove a centre of tough resistance to the 74th Division's right, but in the fog the British easily passed it and afterwards cleared it. As the line moved over and round Knoll 140 the shells of its own barrage swished low overhead, and the German barrage began to fall there.⁵⁵ Crossing the sunken road on the eastern slope the 4th Battalion met infantry fire. German posts at the big quarries and spoil heaps on both sides of the valley were shooting blindly into the fog. In the half waterlogged switch leading south of Hargicourt the 2nd Battalion also stumbled on Germans. But the flanks always enveloped them and at the first shots from the rear the Germans, however numerous, surrendered.

It was now daylight and, crossing the valley where it bent across the front, the scattered groups of New South Welshmen arriving through the mist were hurriedly pushed into a rough order along the line of the railway and immediately climbed

⁵⁵ Lt. P. F. Ryan (2nd Bn.) was killed. He had been in charge of the trench-mortars at Anzac (*see Vol. II p. 826*); returned to Australia as a captain in 1917; re-enlisted as a private in Feb. 1918; rose to acting-sergeant in May, and to lieutenant in July.

the opposite hill past the big quarries north-west of Hargicourt. German garrisons in trenches before and behind these opened heavy fire into the fog, but were quickly taken in rear. In the old British main line west of Hargicourt 100 were taken, in Bolsover Switch 70; just south of the village some of the 1st Machine-Gun Company advancing among the infantry captured 50. Some groups of Australians here headed on to the III Corps front. Lieut. Kinchington (3rd Battalion) heard Germans behind Templeux still firing strongly at the British, and by lying on the ground managed to sight them beneath the smoke. He attacked, capturing 28 and enabling the right of the 15th Suffolk under Lieut. Truscott⁵⁶ to continue the 74th Division's advance.

Meanwhile the 2nd and the right of the 4th approached their objective, Hargicourt, a straggling village with some of the walls left shoulder high and battered chimneys. As Capt. Newth of the 4th Battalion moved up the main road with a scout in each gutter ahead and a few men following him, a dog dashed past from behind him with a message tied to its collar. He could not shoot for fear of hitting the scouts, and before they understood his shouts the animal flashed out of sight between the ruins, doubtless bearing a note from a German company commander in Templeux. In the face of odd shots from gardens, hedges, and broken walls the troops cleared the village. They were now beyond the old British main line, but as General Monash had arranged for both his divisions to advance about 600 yards farther before the pause in the barrage they passed on to the eastern outskirts⁵⁷ where they dug in.



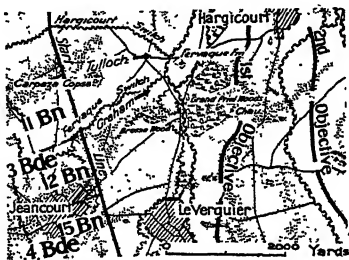
The two attacking battalions of the 3rd Brigade—11th on left, 12th on right—moved up the next two spurs on the south, leading to the strong-posts at the ruined Fervaque Farm and

⁵⁶ Lt. E. H. S. Truscott, 15th Bn., Suffolk Regiment.

⁵⁷ This intermediate objective was called the "brown line."

to Grand Priel Wood. The two forward companies of each battalion, hugging their own barrage, escaped the German reply, but in each case it caught the mopping up company, Capt. "Wally" Hallahan of the 11th being killed and Capt. Burt (12th) having a foot blown off.⁵⁸ Except for the shots that killed Lieut. Butler and his men, the 11th and 12th met no opposition till beyond Carpeza Copse. There two machine-guns⁵⁹ held up the 11th and killed Sergt. Muldoon⁶⁰ of Capt. Tulloch's company just as Muldoon reached them. Corpl. Nelley,⁶¹ placing two Lewis guns to distract the German fire, rushed the position. The right company, Lieut. Graham's, was 73 strong (including headquarters) but had a front

of 500 yards. Five of its privates⁶² walking along the parapet of Fervaque Switch shooting into dugouts and taking odd prisoners, found themselves peering into a wide bay filled with fifty upturned faces and a hundred upraised arms. They hurriedly pushed the Germans into some sort of order and sent



them to the rear in charge of one man.⁶³ Nearing the old British main line at Hargicourt Switch Tulloch became unsure of his direction, and going on with two men⁶⁴ became involved in a close fight with two heavy machine-guns. In ten minutes Tulloch and his companions had killed or wounded the crews and captured the guns. Along Fervaque Switch and about Fervaque Farm Graham's company took post after post, the

⁵⁸ A few men were hit by short shooting by their own guns, among them being Lt. J. G. Simmons (Launceston), 12th Bn., who was mortally wounded. Generally, however, the barrage was excellent. Hallahan, a beloved officer, was an original machine-gunner of the 11th—"a tall, thin, gentle looking chap with a refined face, a gallant man with a quiet manner . . . a very attractive character." He was in London, about to be married and to leave for Australia on transport duty, when he was recalled; had he been married he would have been among the "Anzac leave" men.

⁵⁹ At a junction of the long switch leading to Fervaque Farm.

⁶⁰ Sgt. S. R. Muldoon (No. 3896; 11th Bn.). Farmer; of Wellington, W.A.; b. Rolands, W.A., 21 Jan. 1898. Killed in action, 18 Sep. 1918.

⁶¹ Cpl. D. W. Nelley, M.M. (No. 6087; 11th Bn.). Wheelwright; of Geraldton, W.A.; b. Geraldton, 8 June 1897.

⁶² One was Pte. F. C. Lucas (Fremantle, W.A.).

⁶³ At this post or a similar one were 8 heavy and 2 light machine-guns.

⁶⁴ C.S.M. B. J. Shipton (Northam, W.A.) and Pte. G. H. Moore (Kellerberrin, W.A.).

mopping up platoons under Lieuts. Colvin⁶⁵ and McKinley⁶⁶ clearing up the positions with extraordinary resourcefulness and enabling the forward troops still to move ahead with the barrage. On the next spur to the south the 12th Battalion was fired at from Brosse Wood in the gully on its left, but a mopping up platoon entering the north-western side of the wood drove out the enemy to the south where Capt. Holyman's company captured them. Two field-guns were in the wood but were not firing—about them Germans lay wounded. At the main line on the ridge other machine-gun posts opened, but the troops worked around them by sound.

Both battalions were tired with the fighting and heavy going, and during the manoeuvring at the main line they lost the barrage. Thus on reaching the summit, whence the undergrowth and felled tree trunks of Grand Priel Wood extended widely into the next valley, they had to win the remaining ground by infantry fighting. How this was done during the long pause of the barrage will be described later.

The 4th Brigade, forming the left of the 4th Division, employed an entirely different disposition. Le Verguier, expected to be one of the strong-points of resistance, lay straight up a wide spur ahead of the start, and only half a mile away. Accordingly, as at Vaire Wood in the battle of Hamel, the 15th Battalion was to go round the north of this obstacle, the 13th round the south, and the 16th would clear the ruins. The old British main line was quickly reached and the frequent belts of wire, often diagonal, forced the officers to rely constantly on their compasses⁶⁷ to keep direction. The sunken road north of le Verguier was filled with wire, and a barbed wire apron lay on top of each bank. Germans held trenches behind it, but part of the 15th passed north of it and fired a Lewis gun down the road. Sergt. Holt⁶⁸ and Pte. Williams⁶⁹ rushed a post at the southern end. The Germans had been

⁶⁵ Lt. H. Colvin, 11th Bn. Public Accountant; of N. Perth, W.A.; b. Elsternwick, 26 Dec. 1891.

⁶⁶ Lt. G. M. McKinley, M.C., M.M., 11th Bn. Miner; of Geraldton, W.A.; b. Northcote, Vic., 5 Nov. 1887. Died 28 Oct. 1940.

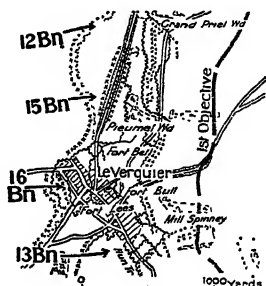
⁶⁷ Some noted, however, that these were affected by the wire.

⁶⁸ L.-Sgt. J. Holt, M.M. (No. 4316; 15th Bn.). Railway employee; of Charters Towers, Q'land; b. Charters Towers, 26 Jan. 1889. Killed in action, 18 Sep. 1918.

⁶⁹ Pte. E. V. Williams, M.M. (No. 6858; 15th Bn.). Grocer; of Rockhampton, Q'land; b. Mt. Usher, Q'land, 7 Mar. 1898.

cowed by the barrage and, despite the great strength of the defences and their many machine-guns, they surrendered.⁷⁰

South of the village the 13th Battalion, after having a few men hit at the start by its own guns,⁷¹ cleared some outposts; Sergt. Sexton⁷² firing a Lewis gun from the hip rushed two of them. At the old British main line (Hun Trench) Capt. Parsonage was wounded by a German bomb and Sergt. Lihou,⁷³ as he went bombing along the parapet to meet the 48th, was killed by a machine-gun that suddenly opened. Capt. Turner⁷⁴ and a small party captured this gun and, leaving a guard of two men, turned eastward over the slope and around le Verguier. The barrage went ahead, the smoke thinned, and objects became visible at a quarter of a mile. Germans manning a bank with a field-gun and trench-mortar were pointed out by Lieut. Price⁷⁵ to Sergt. Sexton who went on at once, firing short bursts with his Lewis gun and calling to his section to follow. He rushed down the bank, shooting the gun's crew, and thence under machine-gun fire across a flat to shoot another group, and then back to the bank, where firing into the dugout entrances he caused 30 Germans to surrender.⁷⁶ He had captured the headquarters of the line battalion of the 58th I.R. (119th Divn.). Capt. Turner's party farther south captured without further fighting its R.A.P. and 7 machine-guns with their crews. A party marching along the Pontru road 200 yards ahead was mistaken for Australians and escaped. The 13th dug in beyond le Verguier.



Le Verguier was to be cleared by the 16th, commanded at

⁷⁰ Holt, a great footballer, had not yet disarmed the whole party when a German N.C.O. drew a revolver and killed him. Williams shot the N.C.O.; two Australians hearing the shots, came up and helped him to complete the capture.

⁷¹ Lt. N. J. McGuire was killed here.

⁷² Sgt. M. V. Buckley, V.C., D.C.M. (served as No. 6594 Gerald Sexton), 13th Bn. Motor trimmer; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Upper Hawthorn, Vic., 13 Apr. 1891. Accidentally killed, 27 Jan. 1921.

⁷³ Sgt. J. Lihou, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 5713; 13th Bn.). Farm hand; of Wongarbon, N.S.W.; b. Dubbo, N.S.W., 6 Feb. 1895. Killed in action, 18 Sep. 1918.

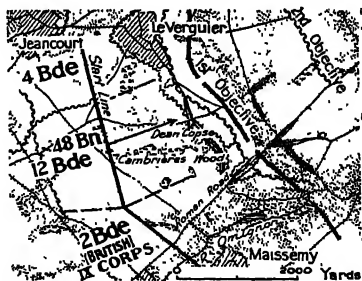
⁷⁴ Capt. H. W. Turner, 13th Bn. Station overseer; of Yass, N.S.W.; b. Yass, 14 Nov. 1882.

⁷⁵ Lt. R. L. Price, 13th Bn. Carpenter; of Ascot Vale, Vic.; b. Mt. Egerton, Vic., 26 June 1891.

⁷⁶ He was awarded the Victoria Cross.

this time by Capt. Lynas. Being fired on as it approached the village the 16th broke into small groups, each making its way through the ruins by the most convenient route. The village had been elaborately fortified. The old wire belts had been little cut and had been extended through the ruins, forcing the men on to the winding roads. Several strong-points had been prepared and densely garrisoned. But many of the machine-guns were found abandoned; and, though at three large strong-points the Germans fired machine-guns and threw bombs, they were quickly surrounded, whereupon most of them retreated to their deep dugouts where they were bombed and surrendered. At Fort Bell 70 including a regimental commander were captured. At Fort Lees 28 prisoners and 6 machine-guns were taken by a private⁷⁷ leading his section. The key position, Fort Bull, behind the centre of the village, was defended by many machine-guns, but few of them were fired; 5 officers, including an artillery observer, and 32 men came from one dugout. Beyond, in the old British trenches, machine-guns and trench-mortars were in position, but were weakly fought. With less than 20 casualties the 16th⁷⁸ took 450 prisoners, 60 machine-guns, four or five field-guns and two anti-aircraft guns, and dug in temporarily in the old British main line east of the village while the 13th and 15th swept round to the halting place beyond. This brigade, having started closest to its objective, had now two hours to wait.

The southernmost Australian brigade, 12th, used a different battalion for each phase of the advance. In the first, the 48th Battalion attacked across a valley, the objective being the old British main line on the low spur opposite. The left company⁷⁹



⁷⁷ Pte. (later Cpl.) A. F. Lawrence (Albany, W.A.). He then captured a second post.

⁷⁸ The attacking companies were commanded by Lt. H. J. Bradley, Capt. J. S. Kerr and Lt. L. D. McCarthy, and the mopping up company by Capt. H. Wilson (Perth, W.A.).

⁷⁹ Under Capt. C. H. King (Maryborough, Q'land). Lt. L. N. Ward's platoon captured 50 men.

easily captured its sector, only 1,200 yards from the start-line. The centre was fired on at Dean Copse but quickly out-flanked the Germans there.⁸⁰ The right company came under much heavier fire, its commander, Lieut. Fletcher,⁸¹ being badly wounded. The 12th Brigade's tank made a brave attack, going through the Australian barrage,⁸² and across the front into the IX Corps area. The 48th pierced the trench-line at several points,⁸³ and the Germans retired to their battalion headquarters in a copse behind the spur, and to a sunken road some distance away where their officers could be seen reorganising them.

The old British main line which, on the Australian front, had thus been everywhere taken, was an immensely strong position, held by quite as many troops as had attacked it—probably by more.

The German archives show that the 51st Corps anticipated the offensive: the map seized with Col. Marsden showed the final objective. The line-divisions were ordered to increase their depth and the counter-attack divisions to "stand to." The 51st Corps had in line this day the 5th Bav., 1st Res., and 119th Divns. (the 1st Res. having relieved the 21st on Sep. 13). Farther north, holding Templeux-le-Guérard, was the 94th I.R. (38th Divn., southern flank of the IV Res. Corps).

Few German histories of the fight contain any detail. That of the 94th I.R. says that its pickets were overrun in the fog. A company behind Templeux, at the quarry, opened blind fire at 6 o'clock and at 6.20 was shot at from its rear. Few men of the forward battalion



and at 6.20 was shot at from its rear. Few men of the forward battalion

⁸⁰ Lts. J. A. Bingley (Adelaide) and A. F. Franke (Adelaide) of Capt. G. A. Pavy's company and their men achieved this, capturing 3 machine-guns and crews.

⁸¹ Lt. R. N. J. Fletcher, 48th Bn. Cordial manufacturer; of Broken Hill, N.S.W.; b. Wilcannia, N.S.W., 21 May 1881.

⁸² The tank, in which was Lt. R. S. Rafferty of the 48th, had come up past the south of Cambrières Wood. It had to steer by compass.

⁸³ Pte. A. G. Lines (Adelaide), a Lewis gunner, and Cpl. S. Massey (Edwards-town, S.A.) were specially marked; Pte. R. Pinto secured 50 prisoners in a single group.

escaped. The history of the 19th Bav. I.R. (5th Bav. Divn.) which held Hargicourt records most battles in detail, basing its account on the documents, but tells nothing of this. The 21st B.I.R. says that the halt at Hargicourt and Villeret gave the temporary impression that the attack had ended there. The historian of the 3rd R.I.R. (1st Res. Divn.) thinks that the advance probably began at 6.55! The history of the 59th R.I.R., which held le Verguier with two battalions, one in the line and one in close support, says that infantry fire ceased soon after 6 a.m. and presently observers farther back saw the village spewing out masses of enemy troops. The 46th R.I.R. (119th Divn.) says frankly: "as to the details of the fighting.....all information fails."

The fact is that, as already stated, the attack had arrived suddenly through the mist, and when fired on from the rear few Germans would face the determined men who came at them. Capt. Lynas, always a most generous opponent said of the taking of le Verguier:

If the German had had the fighting spirit of a louse, one battalion on the whole brigade front would have made it impossible to go forward; but he never fought an inch so far as we were concerned.

Another young veteran, Lieut. Graham of the 11th said, "If there had been any defence at all we could not have got this objective with one man to 12 yards [in the leading companies]." Frightened Germans ran past his company asking "Which way?" to the Australian rear.⁸⁴

During the pause the barrage was much lighter than before, many batteries being on the move and the rate of fire slow. The mist, largely due to smoke shell, thinned and German snipers and machine-guns in the next positions began to fire at the digging troops. On the right, where the advance of the 1st British Division had been slower, Lieut. Parry⁸⁵ of the flank company of the 48th brought up the flank troops of the 2nd Royal Sussex into the old British main line (there Mareval Trench) and then returning to his own platoon worked it around the shoulder of the spur into the valley in which the German battalion from the line was being rallied by its staff

⁸⁴ Occasionally some stouter man resisted—for example one German bombed a party which was taking prisoners, killed Pte. H. E. Strongman (Norseman, W.A.), and enabled the prisoners to escape. Br.-Gen. Leane records that he asked a German battalion commander, whom the 48th captured, how it was that so few of the 48th had taken so many prisoners in such excellent positions. "The Australians are so brave," said the German, "and so quick, that it is impossible to stop them."

⁸⁵ Lt. W. Parry, M.C., 47th and 48th Bns. Tin miner; of Lottah, Tas.; b. Scamander, Tas., 21 July 1887.

at a copse and a more distant road. Lieuts. Cameron⁸⁶ and Gelston⁸⁷ with their platoons also moved over the spur, partly through a sunken road on the right—portion of the old Roman highway to le Cateau—partly farther north. Their Lewis gunners, in particular Pte. Rochford,⁸⁸ dribbled into positions from which they drove these groups to shelter. Rochford caught a large number trying to move from their rallying point at the road. Corpl. Price⁸⁹ worked behind the German headquarters at the wood and bombed the dugout capturing the battalion commander,⁹⁰ his staff, and 60 others. The remaining groups of the enemy found themselves enveloped by the several platoons⁹¹ and in all 187 surrendered here. These were starting to the rear when the hour, 8.30 for the second phase arrived.

Not all the field artillery was yet in position, the ground being soft with rain and the strain on the horses very great.⁹²

It will be convenient—owing to the turn of that day's events—to begin the description of the second phase with the events on the southern flank. In the southernmost (12th **Second Phase** Brigade) sector the 45th Battalion had been warned by Leane that in emergency, but only then, it might have to help the 48th; the desire was to keep it intact for the second phase. It had therefore followed steadily 400 yards behind the 48th—though station was hard to keep in the fog. But the German barrage, constantly shortening but always too late to catch the front troops, also kept pace about 400 yards behind the 48th and incessantly fell on the 45th. As the battalion in the fog tried to pick its way through gaps in the devious belts of wire, first the adjutant, Capt. Adams,

⁸⁶ Lt. R. E. Cameron, M.C., 48th Bn. School teacher; of East Melbourne; b. Portarlington, Vic., 27 Oct. 1890.

⁸⁷ Lt. A. J. Gelston, M.C., 48th Bn. Clerk; of Unley and Hawthorne, S.A.; b. Hawthorn, Vic., 3 Aug. 1892.

⁸⁸ See Vol. V, p. 390.

⁸⁹ Sgt. T. A. Price, D.C.M. (No. 3300; 48th Bn.). Labourer; of McLaren Vale, S.A.; b. Noarlunga, S.A., 18 July 1893.

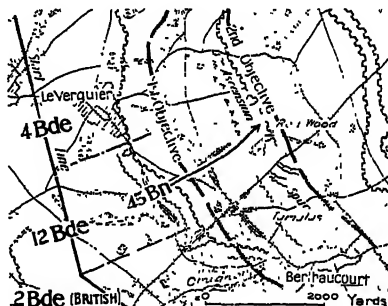
⁹⁰ The one whom Leane interrogated.

⁹¹ Cameron's platoon had previously been held up on the objective by 80 Germans. Placing two Lewis guns to keep the enemy's heads down Cameron and Pte. A. Dudley (Perth, W.A.) jumped in among them, capturing the lot and 4 machine-guns.

⁹² Especially for the ammunition columns, which worked partly with four-horse teams, but the drivers gave their horses great care. The shortage was due to the necessity of equipping American divisions.

then the commander, Lieut.-Col. Loutit (of Anzac fame) were wounded and Lieut. Hill,⁹³ signal officer, killed. Lieuts. Hughes,⁹⁴ intelligence officer, and Horne,⁹⁵ a company commander, were mortally wounded and many others hit.⁹⁶ While the 48th fought over the spur ahead, the 45th sheltered in a sunken road and shell craters, the barrage still falling about it.

The mist had now cleared and the local fog caused by the barrage was thinner. Brightening clouds presently let through the sun which glistened on wet leaves and grass and shook like spray from the many thistles as the men brushed them. The forward parties of the 48th, completing their mopping up, were just sending their prisoners back over the spur⁹⁷ when the 45th appeared on its summit, advancing in magnificent order. Its task was to seize the next and higher spur along whose crest, three-quarters of a mile ahead, lay the string of outpost trenches, each circled by wire, of the old British outpost-line. Away on the southern shoulder of this ridge, near where the old Roman track climbed it, was a tumulus, an ancient mound.



German machine-guns had been expected to open here, but the British company on the flank reached it abreast of the 45th, and it was from the trenches farther on that fire came. The British were stopped but the 45th pushed on finding the Germans still so disorganised that the line of posts on the hilltop and several hundred prisoners were taken with little resistance. The expected barrage from the Hindenburg guns had not descended; on the contrary German shelling had almost entirely ceased. On the right near the hilltop the teams of a German

⁹³ Lt. S. J. Hill, M.M., 47th and 45th Bns. Stationer; of S. Brisbane; b. S. Brisbane, 1897. Killed in action, 18 Sep. 1918.

⁹⁴ Lt. L. R. Hughes, 45th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Lakemba, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 20 Apr. 1891. Died of wounds, 1 Oct. 1918.

⁹⁵ Lt. W. J. Horne, 45th Bn. Explosives expert; of Melbourne; b. Wellington, N.Z., 27 Aug. 1876. Died of wounds, 18 Sep. 1918.

⁹⁶ Including Lt. F. W. Fifield (Stanmore, N.S.W.).

⁹⁷ This incident, photographed by Capt. Wilkins, is shown in *Vol. XII, plate 552*.

battery of medium howitzers tried to limber up and withdraw the guns, some machine-gunners firing to protect them. A platoon of the 45th at once pushed forward its Lewis guns, shot the teams and machine-gunners and captured guns and crews. Farther north a second battery lay abandoned. The left of the 45th, which had also to cross the intervening end of Ascension Spur, captured a remnant of the Germans scattered by the 48th, passed two more guns, and then seized the posts on the hilltop, finding the garrisons in dugouts.

The history of the 58th I.R. (119th Divn.) says that the remnant of its I Bn. and part of the III were captured here. The regiment had 27 members killed or wounded and 12 officers and 294 men missing.

From this ridge⁹⁸ the troops looked out over a wider valley to the next spur along the top of which could be seen the dense wire belts and white parapets of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line. The weather was now bright. Over the hills south of the Omignon the upper half of St. Quentin Cathedral was visible from all high ground for miles around. Low on the right, on the Omignon flats, a German battery at a cross-roads in Pontruet fired at close range until shelled out of the village.⁹⁹ In the valley ahead were German batteries and transport moving off for safety.

Next on the north, the 4th Brigade employed in the second stage the two battalions that had established the line beyond le Verguier, 13th and 15th.¹⁰⁰ The halt, which there lasted two hours, had allowed several hundred Germans with machine-guns and field-guns to escape and reorganise. But the creeping barrage, when it thickened again after the halt, was good and the Germans seemed cowed. The 13th, which now went on with its four companies in line,¹ climbed the opposing ridge, Ascension Spur, taking farm after farm—by the now normal tactics—against half-hearted resistance, Sergt. Sexton again silencing the machine-guns in successive posts by standing full height to spray them with bursts from his Lewis gun. In

⁹⁸ The scene at this stage is shown in photographs 550-1, Vol. XII. Lt. J. H. Dietze (Marrickville, N.S.W.) was killed here.

⁹⁹ The 110th (How.) Bty. apparently shelled this village.

¹⁰⁰ The 16th, in rear, had patrolled a gap between them, and now moved up to the line they left.

¹ Col. Marks had intended to leap-frog with his support companies but in the first stage the fog, and in the second the thinness of the line, caused all companies to be employed.

Coronet Post on the summit were a dozen German machine-guns, mostly mounted on the parapet, but while the barrage fell on the place the crews were in dugouts and the New South Welshmen, rushing in as the barrage lifted, found the garrison still there. Eighty were captured in a trench near Ascension Farm. The 15th also kept very close to its barrage: "I almost wore myself out stopping the Diggers from getting into it," said a young platoon commander² cheerfully; he had not one man killed. At Priel crater a German battalion headquarters with a number of machine-guns "could have made things difficult if they had had the guts," said Col. Johnston a few days later; but resistance ceased as the 15th closed.

Our men, fighting like veterans, simply walked around these places (Johnston added); it was their last fight, and their best.

Several hundred prisoners were taken by each battalion.

Actually here and in le Verguier most of the infantry of the 1st Res. Divn. was captured. A German doctor, surprised here by the 15th, had just been telephoning to the rear position. "You'll find a lot more men farther on," he said, "but I don't think you'll have much trouble with them." The history of the 59th R.I.R. calls this "the blackest day in the history of the regiment." The losses "were frightful"—4 officers and 38 others killed or wounded and 24 officers and 617 others missing.

As the 13th and 15th dug in on the eastern slope of Ascension ridge, machine-guns and snipers in the Hindenburg Outpost-Line on the next ridge opened a distant but troublesome fire.

Next on the left, before and during the halt, the 3rd Brigade having lost the barrage had almost continual fighting about Grand Priel Wood. The right company of the 12th lost its commander, Capt. Houghton,³ there but Lieut. Archer⁴ of the 3rd Machine Gun Company took charge.⁵ In the Château grounds a German headquarters fought for a time and then was captured in its dugouts. The 11th also had to fight through the wood. Lieut. "Wally" Graham, working up hill with a party of five, glanced at his map and then looked up to see a row of

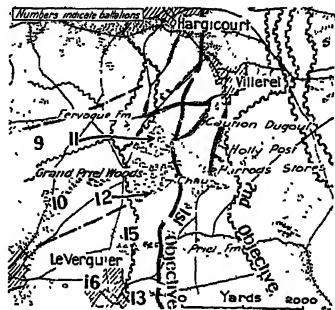
² Lt. F. N. Livingston (Kerang, Vic.).

³ Maj. S. R. Houghton, D.S.O., M.C., V.D., 12th Bn. Telegraphist, of Lower Sandy Bay, Tas.; b. Perth, Tas., 22 Mar. 1893.

⁴ Lt. F. Archer, 12th Bn. Of Pontville, Tas.; b. Colchester, Eng., 6 Sep. 1891.

⁵ Later Lt. R. W. Fletcher, *liaison* officer with the 15th, took command.

red cap bands looking over a log above him. He drew his revolver and a row of hands went up as if by clockwork. These were men who had fled from the front. Graham sent them off without escort. At the objective, however, a deadly fire was opened from a trench at Caution Dugouts on the next small spur. The bullets razed the ground on which the 11th was digging. Lieut. Elliott⁶ was killed. While Graham walked over to consult Capt. Tulloch, leaving his men sheltered from this fire, Lieut. McKinley arrived with some moppers up, and at once attacked. On Tulloch's front Sergt. Grubnau⁷ with a Lewis gun worked forward along a road bank, to a heap of stones, and so forth until he forced the Germans to keep their heads down. On Graham's front Stokes mortars were used, and eventually a Lewis gunner of the 9th, Corpl. Tayler,⁸ walking fully erect so as to spray the Germans with his gun at the hip, reached their parapet and fired down at them. Some dived for the dugouts, others ran along the trench; twenty-five, with several machine-guns and trench-mortars and a field-gun, were captured there, and the mortars and machine-guns were at once turned⁹ upon German machine-guns that were firing from Villeret. A tank which now came through swept over the ground ahead, silencing machine-guns, rolling down the wire, and spreading terror among the Germans within sight.



It was then 8.30. The barrage for the second stage fell, and the 10th and 9th Battalions, with which General Bennett was attacking the second and third objectives, came through, as did the 1st and 3rd on the 1st Brigade's front farther north. The 10th at once met troublesome fire from Germans who had been firing during the halt from a small quarry and dump ("Harrod's

⁶ Lt. D. M. Elliott, 11th Bn. Architect; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Brighton, Vic., 1896. Killed in action, 18 Sep. 1918. (He was an original private of the 12th.)

⁷ Sgt. T. Grubnau, M.M. (No. 1035; 11th Bn.). Fetter; of Coorow, W.A.; b. Silvertown, N.S.W., 22 June 1891.

⁸ Cpl. C. W. Tayler, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 1759; 9th Bn.). Labourer; of Pomona, Q'land; b. Lismore, N.S.W., 1894.

⁹ By the men of the 3rd M.G. Coy. and 3rd L.T.M. Bty.

Stores") on a spur in the valley. The machine-guns here and in several copses on the opposite hillside caught a line of the South Australians crossing between this spur and Priel Farm. Many were killed and the barrage was lost, but the right, led by Lieut. W. S. Bennett, pushed on up the main hill about Holly Post. Though faced by three machine-guns Bennett himself worked to a flank, entered the trench, and armed with his revolver captured the three guns. At the outpost-line thus entered 100 Germans with 12 machine-guns and 4 field-guns surrendered. The 9th Battalion also was met by machine-gun fire from the ruins of Villeret on the summit on its left, and from sunken roads south of that village. Here, to the admiration of all onlookers, a tank swept ahead into and round the village, although it was hit direct by a shell and its crew severely shaken.¹⁰ The sunken road south of Villeret was cleared partly by Sergt. Bentley¹¹ whose leadership was outstanding.

The resistance in Villeret also held up the right company (Capt. Steen's) of the 1st Battalion. But the left company (Maj. Street's) climbed the hill between the sources of the Cologne, and met no strong fire till approaching the old British outpost-line on the summit, near the ruined brick foundations of Cologne Farm. Here a tank was to assist, and punctually it came, made for the old British outpost-line, and routed out the garrison. As the 11th and its tank cleared Villeret, the 1st, now with all companies in line,¹² was able to work past on the north.¹³ The barrage had been lost; the Germans quickly shortened the range of their field-guns and Steen's company had three officers wounded;¹⁴ but after approaching by section rushes Lieut. Hudson¹⁵ and his platoon charged and captured part of the old British outpost-line (Railway Trench) and the rest was soon seized.

The 3rd Battalion had to capture the northern part of the Cologne Farm spur. While its right company (Lieut.

¹⁰ The German field-guns, however, wasted much fire on one dummy tank which was now visible far in rear, and was shelled for two hours.

¹¹ Sgt. J. T. Bentley, D.C.M., M.M. (No. 664; 9th Bn.). Linesman; of Casino, N.S.W.; b. Casino, 1886.

¹² Those under Lts. Kelleway and Sampson had been in support.

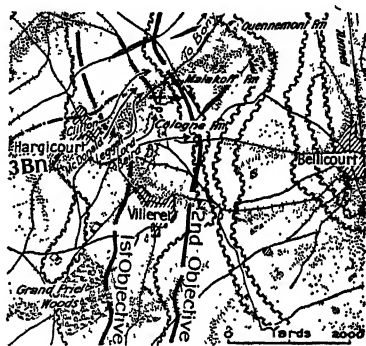
¹³ Here in a small deep quarry known as "The Egg" the engineers examining the dugouts found a number of Germans and machine-guns.

¹⁴ Lts. Gaskell and Judd by shells and Lt. Page by a machine-gun.

¹⁵ Lt. C. Hudson, M.C.; 1st Bn. Surveyor; of Maryborough, Q'land; b. Nelson, N.Z., 16 June 1890.

Shelley's¹⁶) was assembling during a halt, the intelligence officer, Lieut. Clark, advised the platoon commanders, Lieuts. Leggett,¹⁷ Lord¹⁸ and Baird, to go for all they were worth, as by "sticking to the barrage" they would help the troops on their left. Actually the left company (Lieut. Clifton's¹⁹) from the start headed up the next spur on the north into the territory of the 74th Division which itself had been driven farther north by a German post in a concrete emplacement. The support company of the 3rd (Capt. McDonald's) found itself in the gap thus made. Lieut. Hawkshaw²⁰ brought up rifle-grenadiers and captured the post that had caused the trouble, and McDonald's company also worked through the territory of the 74th Division.

But the three platoons of the right company duly covered the battalion's whole front on Cologne Spur. Hurrying with the barrage Lieut. Baird passed over Cologne Farm without seeing a German there—those seen were fleeing into the valley north of it. Only three shots were fired at him and he entered the old British outpost-line (at Ferret Trench) *with* the barrage.



Lieut. Lord, to advance quickly, split his platoon into two, half being led by Sergt. McMillan.²¹ Half way up the northern slope of the spur the left was stopped by machine-gunners in a knot of trenches. Leggett's platoon on the north side of the valley was sniping across at these when it saw three Australians coming from the south towards the nest of guns. They were

¹⁶ Capt. E. R. Shelley, M.C., 3rd Bn. Farmer and grazier; of Henley, N.S.W., b. Woolwich, N.S.W., 1 July 1892.

¹⁷ Lt. R. O. Leggett, 3rd Bn. Bank clerk; of Randwick, N.S.W.; b. St. Peters, N.S.W., 1 Jan. 1891.

¹⁸ Lt. J. N. Lord, 3rd Bn. Station manager; of Quirindi, N.S.W.; b. Bathurst, N.S.W., 7 Feb. 1878.

¹⁹ Lt. C. J. Clifton, M.C., 3rd Bn. Station overseer; of Liverpool, N.S.W.; b. Burrowa, N.S.W., 12 Jan. 1890.

²⁰ Lt. E. Hawkshaw, M.C., 3rd Bn. Clerk; of Sydney; b. Sydney, 1890.

²¹ Sgt. T. McMillan, D.C.M. (No. 2097; 3rd Bn.). Linesman; of Sydney; b. Glasgow, 1882.

Sergt. McMillan and two of his men.²² Following closely on the barrage, they had seen a machine-gun firing at the troops on the left, and they hurried to work round into the trench from which it fired. With a shock they found the trench full of Germans, but putting a bold face on their surprise they hurled in their bombs. The whole trench-full surrendered, whereupon all other Germans in the valley fled to the rear. Resistance ended and Lord's and Leggett's platoons, now in scattered parties, advanced as fast as they could parallel to the roads leading from Hargicourt to Bellicourt and Bony.

Now arrived the juncture at which, on all parts of the Australian front, officers and men had to make the "sincere effort" to reach the Hindenburg "Outpost"-
Third Phase Line by exploitation. Had any battalion commander decided to send out a couple of weak patrols, and had the patrols when sent out reported themselves stopped by strong machine-gun fire which could not be overcome without serious casualties, Monash's order would have completely exonerated them.

But the troops knew the plans. Not only battalion commanders but company and platoon leaders, sergeants, and men, knew as well as their brigadiers that what was desired was to obtain a position looking down on the Canal, so that the main Hindenburg Line behind it could be attacked in the next battle. All realised that the attack would really have failed if the Hindenburg Outpost-Line on the watershed screening the Canal remained in German hands; and this knowledge decided the day's results.

In part of the 1st Division's area the task was simplified by the fact that, as previously mentioned, the old British front there keyed into the German. On the heights east of Cologne Farm and Villeret the old British and German "outpost"-lines ran close together for 2,000 yards and at some points interlaced. In this sector the protruding part of the old British lines lay ahead of this day's second objective but not so far as the third. Lieuts. Meyers and Salisbury, commanding the two front companies of the 9th, immediately on reaching the second objective and while they collected their scattered groups, sent

²² L.-Cpl. G. Bradford (Armidale, N.S.W.) and Pte. F. B. O'Donnell (Sydney).

ahead patrols among the still more scattered parties of the enemy. Sergt. Bentley, leading his patrol over the crest from which he looked down Quarry Ravine straight into Bellicourt, was faced near Quarry Wood by some Germans whom an officer was trying to rally. He charged straight at them just as Gower had done at Crépey Wood, shot the officer, and bayoneted the first men met. The rest fled or surrendered. Going on through the wood he found at its farther edge another officer trying to rally



some men. Bentley shot him and took 17 prisoners. Farther south another patrol had thrust out and captured Quarry "Knoll" (the spoil heap of the quarries near Haute Bruyère Farm), some 200 Germans here fleeing and abandoning one field battery and the headquarters of two, leaving code books and other documents.²³

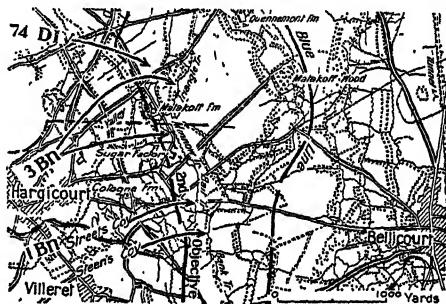
It is typical of the inability of German writers to record a real defeat that the history of the 3rd R.I.R. (1st Res. Divn.), whose rear defences the 9th Bn. was penetrating at this vital spot, claims that in spite of heavy losses the 18th of September was "a day of fame" for the regiment.

Posts were at once placed by the 9th along the front and support trenches of the Hindenburg outpost-system. They could see the Canal and the water in it; the tunnel entrance, only a mile away; Bellicourt village sprawling across the high valley north of the tunnel mouth; Nauroy a mile beyond, on the Hindenburg support defence line; roads with troops and waggons moving; the Canal bridges with engineers busy at repairs. From the Knoll Meyers' company overlooked miles of country to front and flank. This position was on the final line of exploitation and the importance of it for any force attacking the Canal was obvious at a glance.

²³ Later a German officer rode up to within 100 yards of these guns; when fired on he galloped off. Two teams were then sent by the Germans to remove the guns but drivers and horses were shot.

Next on the north Capt. Steen's company of the 1st also, after the 9th got in, placed outposts along the old German front line (Bank Trench). Farther north, where the shell-cratered crest near Cologne Farm was crossed by the road from Hargicourt to Bellicourt—transformed by the Germans into a plank road—the Hindenburg Outpost-Line bent north-east following the watershed past Malakoff Wood to Quennemont Farm, the old British and German systems diverging until they were again nearly a mile apart (though each side had held advanced positions between). Maj. Street's patrol sent out from the old British front at Bait Trench, where the separation began, found the Germans ahead difficult to locate.²⁴

The northernmost battalion, 3rd, was still west of the watershed, in the long valley leading up from Hargicourt; the scattered companies attacking up both the hollow and its slopes, partly through Hussar Post on the 74th Division's front, secured the old British outpost-line (Minnow Trench) by Malakoff Farm on the southern side of the valley, and an old German outwork (Triangle Trench) in the hollow; and here part of the 10th Buffs (74th Divn.) coming down the north-west slope presently joined them.²⁵ Sergt. McMillan and his companions hurried along the valley to Malakoff Wood at its head. But Germans on the watershed farther north, about Quennemont Farm, made the Hindenburg Outpost-Line impossible to reach there.²⁶



Villeret appears to have been held by fugitives and rear companies

²⁴ The patrol under Lt. F. A. Graham had its corporal, L. J. Gosper (Meranburn, Molong, N.S.W.), killed by a machine-gun bullet. Maj. Street was afterwards wounded at the same place.

²⁵ The left company of the 3rd, Lt. Clifton's, was eventually found in Triangle Trench. Here the Germans left unopened parcels of cakes and a boiler of hot coffee. In Minnow Trench was a drunken battery commander.

²⁶ Lts. C. J. McDonald and Hawkshaw at Triangle Trench were wounded by a machine-gun firing down the Bony-Hargicourt road.

of the 7th Bav. I.R., Cologne heights by those of the 21st, and the valleys north-east of Hargicourt by the 19th. The troops on the northern side of Hargicourt valley who opposed the right of the 74th Divn. and the left of the 3rd Bn. (especially at the cross ways at Benjamin Post) were mainly the 94th I.R. (38th Divn.). The III/21st Bav. I.R. would not follow its commander when he tried to counter-attack; the commander of the regiment, Maj. Hacke, was mortally wounded and captured.

Thus by 10.30 a.m. the right of the 1st Division was consolidating the exploitation objective, overlooking Bellicourt and the Canal, while its left was beyond the second objective though short of the final one. The battalions south of the 9th were faced by a different task. There the Hindenburg Outpost-Line lay on a different ridge from that of the old British outpost-line, and higher; the slopes between were untrenched, covered with grass and thistles, and, in the 4th Division's sector, a mile wide. The German trench was protected by dense entanglement. The Australian brigadiers concerned—Leane (12th) and Drake Brockman (4th)—realised well that, whatever the Corps orders might say, the only hope of seizing such a position lay in an attack in force; it would be merely "eye-wash" to attempt it with patrols. Con-

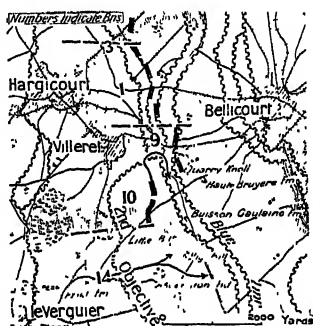


sequently each had given the task to a whole battalion, the 46th and 14th respectively. At the eleventh hour, when it was learnt that the British division on the right would not begin to exploit until two hours after reaching the second objective, the task of the Australian right seemed hopeless and the right brigade accordingly decided to use only patrol methods; but on hearing that Lieut.-Col. Crowther of the 14th and his brigadier were still determined to adhere to their plan of a strong attack, Lieut.-Col. Corrigan²⁷ of the 46th and General Leane decided that they must do the same, and safeguard both the 14th's flank and their own; but Leane advised Corrigan to attack in great depth.

²⁷ Lt.-Col. J. J. Corrigan, D.S.O. Commanded 46th Bn. 1918. Miner; of Zeehan, Tas.; b. Kumara, N.Z., 9 Apr. 1892.

dribbling forward first his leading companies and guarding his southern flank.

The same difficulties, though in less degree, faced the right battalion of the 1st Division, the 10th. On its front the exploitation objective (the "blue line"), though only half a mile from the second objective, had to be approached over the open summit of Buisson ridge, and the patrols were pinned down there by intense machine-gun fire. All available machine and Lewis guns of the 9th, 10th, and 14th were then turned on to sweep the German line while the left company of the 10th went into the Hindenburg Outpost-Line captured by the 9th, and thence bombed down it. The Germans, already under fierce fire from the front, surrendered easily to this flank attack. As the prisoners were sent back over the open from section after section of the Hindenburg trench, the companies of the 10th lying opposite made their way frontally into that line, cutting through the entanglement or finding gaps, and occupied both front and support line near Buisson Gaulaine Farm. Capt. Perry²⁸ sent patrols 500 yards down the slopes towards the canal, and at 11.55 reported that his company was just beyond the "blue line."



Next on the south, the whole 14th Battalion had advanced through the 13th and 15th into the wide Ascension valley immediately the protective barrage ceased at 10.8. Its two front line companies²⁹ had not gone ten yards when machine-guns from the Hindenburg Outpost-Line on the opposite crest opened. Some of the troops that had taken the second objective and now watched the 14th pass between their rifle-pits, thought the attempt suicidal—and said so—but the platoons of the two front companies of the 14th (under Maj. Wadsworth and Capt. Mackay) advanced by short rushes from shell-hole to

²⁸ Capt. W. H. Perry, M.C., 10th Bn. Moulder; of Broken Hill, N.S.W.; b. Broken Hill, 22 Mar. 1895.

²⁹ Like the 9th, 10th and 46th, the 14th had advanced from the original start-line an hour after the troops employed in the previous phases. North of le Verguier it was faced by a dense barrage, but Maj. Wadsworth, who was leading, cleverly avoided this by swerving north of Pieumel Wood.

shell-hole down the bare slope. German machine-guns were by then firing at them from heights ahead of the 10th, from Ascension Wood in the valley, and from two copses, Big and Little Bill, on the opposite slope. The 14th had expected that the Australian machine-guns on the second objective would fire over their heads to suppress the enemy, but such fire, if given, was not noticeable. The few Germans at Ascension Wood fled as the troops approached; but many of the 14th had already been hit and the two companies—150 men advancing on a front of 1,500 yards—were so weak for their task that, on reaching the shelter of the tongue running out into the valley, Wadsworth conferred with Mackay and decided to bring into line the two support companies (under Lieuts. Aldridge³⁰ and Chubb³¹). The Lewis gunners then concentrated their fire on the copses.³² The German machine-gunners ran from these, and the right company (Wadsworth's) and part of the right support (Aldridge's) worked up the farther hillside and reached the low bank of a road that ran along the hillside, high up like a shelf, only a few hundred yards from the German line on the crest. But whenever any of the 14th showed above that bank, or above the crest of the tongue on which lay Little Bill, there broke out the tempest of machine-gun fire that had stopped the 10th. Company and platoon commanders tried to work forward first at one point, then at another, constantly withdrawing their men to shelter and working up other parts of the slope, only to be met with the same fusillade, which all the Lewis guns, now brought up into the line, could not subdue. The supporting batteries could help against the minor obstacles but against one like this they could do little.³³

The platoon and company leaders seemed to be faced by an impossible task. But about 11 o'clock it became known that the 10th Battalion was getting into the German line through the captured trenches farther north, and Wadsworth, Mackay, and their juniors, after conference, decided to follow the same

³⁰ Capt. N. C. Aldridge, M.C., 14th Bn. Farmer; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Adelaide, 26 Sep. 1892.

³¹ Lt. E. R. Chubb, 14th Bn. Fireman, Vic. Rlys.; of Chiltern, Vic.; b. Chiltern, 29 Jan. 1886.

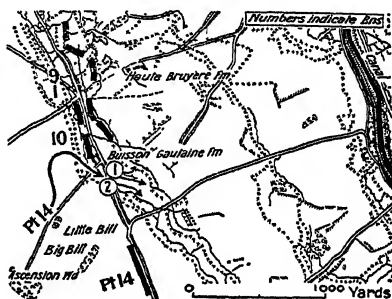
³² The northern copse, Little Bill, was fired on by the 10th from the north flank and by Lt. Hawkins' platoon (14th) farther south.

³³ The 41st Bty. was attached to the 14th Bn. and the rest of the 11th A.F.A. Bde. was in close support.

plan. Mackay's company would be withdrawn⁸⁴ and pass round through the trenches taken by the 10th and bomb southwards along the German front line and at the same time eastwards to the support line. The company's place would be taken by Chubb's company, which would keep down the enemy's heads by intense fire from its Lewis guns.

This was done forthwith. By 12.45 Mackay's company was in the German front line, Lieut. Hawkins'⁸⁵ platoon bombing down it, the Germans fleeing. Near Buisson Farm, however, the trench for fifty yards ran shallow and straight, and troops entering it were fired on by a machine-gun placed on a higher part beyond. Six men were killed there and the exhausted troops, after building a

block north of it, were given a rest. They could see Wadsworth's company lining the road bank farther south, and being shelled by German trench-mortars. Chubb's company, and part of Wadsworth's under Lieut. Rule, were now also brought round to continue the attack. Mackay's company tried to bomb through



1 Mackay. 2 Rule.

to the position then attained by the 10th in the German support line, while Rule bombed southwards in the front line. By arranging with a trench-mortar crew to shell the dangerous machine-gun Rule just managed to get his party past the straight length of trench, but they ran immediately into range of an unsuspected German post. Eight men were hit and the platoon scrambled back through the dangerous trench. Mackay's parties⁸⁶ were held up before reaching the support trench.

Wadsworth decided to wait for dusk, intending to have the German line bombarded during the night, and to attack it at dawn. But he had barely made that decision when there reached him an order to attack at 11 p.m. after a short bombardment,

⁸⁴ Mackay and Lt. Bruford (support company) first reconnoitred the way.

⁸⁵ Lt. D. H. L. Hawkins, 14th Bn. Telegraphist; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Maffra, Vic., 18 May 1888.

⁸⁶ Three platoons bombing in different directions under Lts. Hawkins, G. H. Clarendon-Hyde and H. B. Jackson.



47. PART OF THE 46TH BATTALION IN THE HINDENBURG OUTPOST-LINE

Part of wire-entanglement through which the battalion had attacked is seen in rear of the trench.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E3383.
Taken on 24th September, 1918.*

To face p. 920.



48. THE ENTRANCE OF THE CANAL TUNNEL BELOW BELLICOURT

The position captured by the 4th Australian Division looked down on this at 750-1500 yards' distance. Bellicourt is seen at the top of the picture. To the left are part of the Hindenburg wire and trenches.

To face p. 921.

Photo by Lt. A G Barrett, No 3 Sqn, A F C.

in co-operation with the 46th Battalion which was to make a frontal assault farther south.

The 46th had with great difficulty reached about the same line as the right of the 14th. General Leane's orders were that it must support the advance of the 14th on its left, but also keep touch with the British on its right, who would not be advancing for two hours. Lieut.-Col. Corrigan had accordingly ordered his left front company under Lieut. Wallace³⁷ to advance with the 14th, but the right under Maj. Couchman³⁸ to send forward two platoons, echeloned back from Wallace's flank. The other two must keep touch with the British. At 10.8 Wallace moved in line with the 14th under the same fire, suffering similar loss, and being eventually stopped near the same position but farther south. Couchman's company, as ordered, dribbled two platoons across the valley with only moderate loss. At the bottom they passed a battery and a number of Germans, including two officers, who showed no sign of resistance, and farther on at a lower sunken road a second battery whose officer, mortally wounded ("a decent fellow" Couchman said), told them with disgust that in the trenches on the hilltop they would find 100-200 Germans waiting to surrender.

At this stage the British company next on the right was back near the ancient mound behind the second objective. Couchman had a patrol in touch with it, and he now ordered up his other platoons. About the same time there reached him two keen-spirited officers and a couple of brave men of the British company on his right. The 2nd British Brigade, instead of leapfrogging fresh troops at each stage, was using (on this flank at least) one battalion, the 2nd Royal Sussex, to make the three successive efforts. The strain on the troops was thus very great.³⁹ The senior officer told Couchman that he would bring his company up although the troops farther right were not in line: "Pontruet village is knocking them to bits." Both officers went out with Couchman to a terrace ahead where a

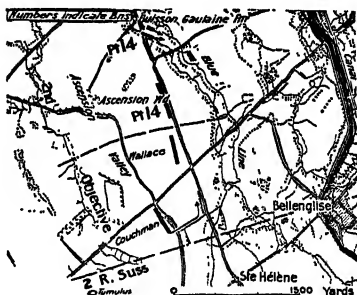
³⁷ Lt. (T/Capt.) A. H. Wallace, M.C., 46th Bn. Storekeeper; of Wandiligong, Vic.; b. Wandiligong, 31 July 1882.

³⁸ Maj. F. M. Couchman, D.S.O., 46th Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Petersham, N.S.W.; b. Strood, Kent, Eng., 26 Feb. 1886.

³⁹ Its commander was ordered to carry out exploitation "unless he thinks his troops have done all they can manage." In that case a sister battalion (1st Northants.) would find the necessary patrols.

shell, bursting near, killed the senior and badly wounded the other.

Meanwhile Wallace's company had dribbled its men as close as it could to the road bank that was held farther north by the 14th. On the slope above Couchman the line of this road was clearly marked by a row of eleven trees. Several German machine-guns here were shelled by the 38th Battery, whose commander, Maj. de Low, had now established an observation post near Col. Corrigan's headquarters and thenceforth dealt quickly with any target detected by de Low or pointed out by the 46th.⁴⁰ Couchman now dribbled his company section by section along a terraced bank on his right and thence to the road which was reached by 2 p.m. Here, as elsewhere, the Germans in the Hindenburg Outpost-Line seemed to be caught napping by the arrival of Australians, the long grass and dense wire probably screening the movement. But when the Germans did awake they swept the front with a fire so intense that movement on the road became almost impossible. Lieut. Byrne,⁴¹ who brought up a platoon of the left support company, was killed. Of three men sent by Couchman along the road to find the left company two were killed and one wounded.⁴² A Lewis gun team under Corpl. Greenwood⁴³ burrowed beneath the entanglement, set up their gun beyond and, whenever the muzzle of a machine-gun appeared over the German trench, tore up the parapet with their bullets. This reduced the German fusillade considerably. At 5 o'clock the British heavy artillery opened fire on the German position and de Low's battery (38th) shelled the wire. The entanglement was much nearer to the road than the maps



⁴⁰ The battery attached to the 46th was the 37th, but ill luck seems to have obstructed its communications with the battalion. However the whole 10th A.F.A. Bde. was in active support.

⁴¹ Lt. L. Byrne, M.C., 46th Bn. Farmer; of Trentham, Vic.; b. Trentham, 14 June 1893. Killed in action, 18 Sep. 1918.

⁴² On the map the road was wrongly marked as sunken.

⁴³ Cpl. H. J. Greenwood, M.M. (No. 1852; 46th Bn.). Labourer; of Bendigo, Vic.; b. Homebush Lower, Vic., 1 Apr. 1893. Died 8 Mar. 1930.

indicated, and shells burst so close that Couchman's company was hastily withdrawn along the terrace bank to the lower road.

At 3 o'clock Col. Corrigan had reported the attack held up, and asked for strong artillery support. General Leane came up and suggested an attack as soon as a bombardment of the German line could be arranged. Corrigan replied that his men were exhausted and must have rest and food before they could make a vigorous attempt. Leane agreed, and it was arranged that the German position should be shelled by the heavies and then attacked at 11 p.m. under cover of a barrage from the field-guns. The attack would be made by the support companies under Lieuts. Muriel⁴⁴ and Leith.⁴⁵ Meanwhile a hot meal would be hurried to the valley and the men rested as far as possible.

This was the attack with which the 14th would co-operate, assembling within the captured part of the Hindenburg front line while the 46th attacked frontally farther south. At dusk bombs and other ammunition were brought up and a hot meal was hurried forward for the 46th. In this fight Australian battalions were so weak that, except for loads taken by one or two invaluable supply tanks to the first objective, all material was carried right to the front on limbers or pack-animals. Thus mules with machine-guns, trench-mortars and ammunition followed the infantry from objective to objective, those⁴⁶ of the 12th L.T.M. Battery arriving without one animal being hit, though some pack mules with the machine-guns were wounded. Limbers with food-containers, water and other stores reached some battalions within an hour or two of their seizing the objectives, coming through safely while the German artillery was disorganised.⁴⁷

During the afternoon on the Australian front no sign of any real counter-attack was noticed; but on the northern flank the 74th Division, shelled out of Triangle Trench by its own artillery, fell back to the second objective at Rifle Pit Trench.

⁴⁴ Lt. A. J. C. Muriel, M.C., 46th Bn. Baptist minister; of Clifton Hill, Vic.; b. Fitzroy, Vic., 29 Jan. 1884.

⁴⁵ Lt. E. A. Leith, D.S.O., 46th Bn. Clerk; of Caulfield, Vic.; b. Drouin, Vic., 24 Mar. 1892.

⁴⁶ Under Lt. R. J. Minty (Sydney).

⁴⁷ Mules came up to company headquarters of the 9th Bn. even on Sep. 19. But the use of limbers gave greater advantages so long as it was possible.

Towards evening Germans assembled on that front and at dusk, working round, forced the 74th farther back.⁴⁸ The Australian machine-guns, however, well guarded the flank. On the southern flank of the Corps the left company of the 2nd Royal Sussex was exhausted and seemed to have lost heart after its captain's death; it advanced but did not hold on. Farther south the 6th British Division had not captured its first objective. General Leane accordingly ordered two companies of the 48th to attack at the same time as the 46th and seize a position above Ste. Hélène, guarding his flank. The commander of the 1st British Division, however, protested that this lay on his front and ordered his own troops to attack it. Leane had to cancel his order but directed the two companies to advance and guard the flank inside his boundary instead.



The hot meal that Col. Corrigan had ordered for the 46th reached Ascension valley in time for the left company but just too late for the right, which was already forming up. However the men had eaten their iron rations, and in high spirits the two former support companies, 160 strong, lined out along the upper road-bank, with the Hindenburg wire immediately ahead, on a front of nearly a mile. Two platoons of the former front companies were to follow and mop up.⁴⁹ Just then, at 10.55, a short but very heavy rainstorm burst over the battlefield. Almost at the same time down came the barrage, promptly and accurately upon the German wire. Three minutes later it advanced to lie for two minutes on the German front line, and the troops began to clamber through the entanglement. Rain was still falling.

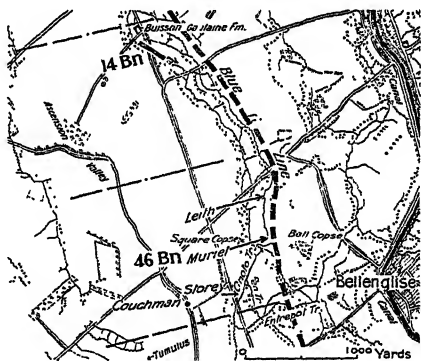
The night attack

⁴⁸ To the sunken road behind Hussar Post.

⁴⁹ The battalion had at that stage 270 rifles, Couchman's company having been reduced to 40 men, and Wallace's to 70.

The wire had been little damaged, but they got through it and entered the trench while the barrage was still on the support line.⁵⁰ Except for a few sentries the Germans had sheltered in their dugouts from rain and barrage. Their machine-guns were in position along the parapet, aimed at gaps in the wire, but not manned. As the commander of the left company, Lieut. Leith, entered the trench, a sentry with a revolver wounded him,⁵¹ but Leith led straight on to the second trench leaving the first to the mopping up platoon. The right company, Lieut. Muriel's, entered on a narrower front, near Square Copse at the northern end of its objective, and it, too, went straight on to the support trench. The right mopping up platoon under Lieut. Storey consequently entered the right sector of the front trench (Onoto Trench) alone, and had to fight there—the corresponding part of the second trench was not captured till later.⁵²

The position of the scattered groups of Australians was precarious for, though many dugouts were reached and bombed before the Germans tried to emerge, there were many more between, containing Germans in far greater numbers than those of the invaders. But the Victorians went for everything with complete confidence. The Germans were evidently bewildered, and it quickly became clear that they were largely reserves, hurried forward that afternoon and put into the front line after dark.



They said they had expected to be attacked at dawn but not before. Many fled southwards, but the great numbers that surrendered became a serious menace, especially when Lieut.

⁵⁰ It lay there for 3 minutes, and then 15 minutes on the communication trenches beyond. Machine-guns also joined in the barrage. A photograph of the wire and the chalk parapet behind it is given in *Vol. XII, plate 554*.

⁵¹ This was his fifth wound received in France.

⁵² Pen Trench was captured that night, and the next trench, 400 yards beyond, on the 20th.

Storey on the right hurrying a flock of several hundred back to Couchman's headquarters in the valley almost ran into a large German patrol on this completely exposed flank. Storey was warned of the German patrol's proximity by meeting a patrol of Couchman's that was trying to cut it off. He at once sent on his prisoners and worked with the Australian patrol in rear of the German one. Unfortunately the enemy saw him and escaped southward. Meanwhile, some of the crowd of prisoners arriving at Couchman's headquarters showed signs of aggression, especially one officer; but a Victorian corporal by keeping them on the move to the rear averted any outbreak. A captured officer remarked to Couchman: "All I can say is you are some bloody soldiers!"

The position on the flank was eased by the arrival, though late, of the two companies of the 48th ordered to guard the flank. One was extended from the British left at the tumulus to the 46th's right. Of the other Couchman placed half at his headquarters and half in the southern end of the objective at Onoto Trench.⁵³ From there it bombed down Pen Trench towards Entrepot Trench, to which the British on the right were to advance in their projected attack at midnight.

In the German line the 46th mopped up as far as it could,⁵⁴ barricaded its right at Pen Trench where the Germans soon became active, and prepared against an expected counter-attack at dawn. Despite the great numbers that had fled or been captured others were still between its posts and were not finally cleared till next day.⁵⁵ In all it took at least 550 prisoners including about 20 officers.⁵⁶

The 14th Battalion had attacked at the same time as the 46th, but from within the Hindenburg trenches. Aldridge's company was to bomb south along the first trench and secure the rest of the 14th's objective in it. Wadsworth's was to assemble beside Aldridge's in the first trench (clinging to the back wall while Aldridge's clung to the front), charge across,

⁵³ Lt. L. N. Ward, 48th, was killed by a shell.

⁵⁴ Lt. Muriel took a few men out towards Bell Copse and captured Germans in dugouts there.

⁵⁵ One man of the right company was captured by them and held for half an hour in a dugout, before the mopping-up party arrived. The same had happened in the second phase to a man of the 45th.

⁵⁶ The 12th Bde. took over 1,400. A photograph of Col. Corrigan and some of his men in the captured trench next day is given in *Vol. XII, plate 553*.

have had their heads down below the parapet, for the balls of fire seemed to be going in a circle just level with our own heads and most of them going over. When we were within thirty yards, some of the Huns heaved some bombs, and then they bolted for their lives. We could see them climbing out of their trenches and vanishing in the darkness. Just as we got near where the bombs had fallen, the things went off and scuttled a few more of the lads; but the worst of the job was done.

Sergt. Bauchop⁶⁰ and his team at once bombed southwards—Germans could be seen fleeing before them. Aldridge's company worked parallel down the first line. Each had half a mile to go, and after several pauses they covered that distance; but in the dark they could find no trace of the 46th till just before dawn, when Rule met one of its officers looking for him. They arranged to signal to each other the position of their battalions' flanks, which proved to be 600 yards apart. The 46th was holding the second trench—it had not men enough to hold the first. Aldridge's company of the 14th advanced on the following night and filled the gap there, a company of the 15th taking its place. Mackay's company which had entered the second trench shortly after Rule,⁶¹ had turned north and found touch with the 10th.

The extraordinarily daring attack by these two closely related battalions⁶² had resulted in an achievement to which there were probably few parallels on the Western Front.

The sector of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line seized by them had, when first attacked, earlier in the day, been manned by the reserve battalions⁶³ of the three regiments of the 119th Divn. (58th I.R., 46th I.R. and 46th R.I.R.) and the reserve companies of the 59th R.I.R. (1st Res. Divn.), together with fugitives from the forward garrison. But since 6 a.m. Second Army had been moving up its reserves. All the senior German staffs concerned were late in learning the situation, and long after H.W.L. 2 and parts of H.W.L. 3 were lost they believed themselves to be dealing merely with the loss of H.W.L. 1. In the 51st Corps sector the three regiments of the counter-attack division (185th) were early sent from the Beaufort Line and Montbrechain (3.5 miles beyond Bellicourt) to Nauroy and Bellicourt, and were ordered, as a precaution, into H.W.L. 3 (A)—the Hindenburg Outpost-Line.⁶⁴ But shortly after 10 a.m. on reaching

⁶⁰ Sgt. L. R. Bauchop (No. 7448; 14th Bn.). Clerk; of Williamstown, Vic.; b. Greta, Vic., 7 May 1894. Killed in action, 20 Sep. 1918.

⁶¹ It was supported only by a machine-gun barrage.

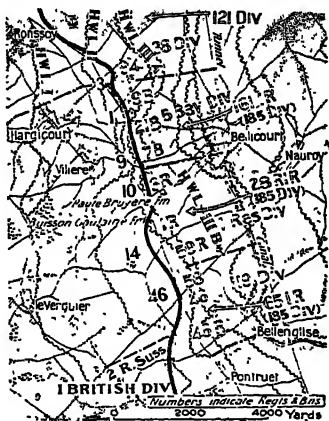
⁶² The 46th was daughter of the 14th, and it had been arranged for the mother and daughter battalions to attack side by side—a cause of great satisfaction to the troops. The same had been done for the 13th and 45th.

⁶³ Each now normally comprising only three companies.

⁶⁴ Their places in reserve were taken by the 21st Div.

Nauroy, they found that in the 1st Res. Divn.'s sector the Australians were already in the 3 (A) line, looking down at them and the Canal. The 28th R.I.R.,⁶⁵ allotted to the 1st Res. Divn., was therefore ordered to occupy the 3 (B) line, half way up the slope from the Canal to the 3 (A) line. Its right battalion (III) did this while the two southern ones made their way to the 3 (A) line still in German hands in that sector. They occupied the support trench, the front line being held by remnants of the line division, machine-gun sharpshooters, and engineers. Farther south, where at 2 p.m. the southern regiment of the 119th Divn. (46th R.I.R.) awoke to the fact that there were Australians immediately in front of its wire, the three battalions of the 65th I.R. about that time filed from Bellenglise into the Hindenburg Outpost-Line. On the northern flank the 161st I.R. was placed west of Bellicourt behind the 5th Bav. Divn.

Opposite the IX British Corps the I Bav. Corps had reported that, in general, it was still holding its position; opposite the III British Corps the IV Res. Corps had lost its main line but was preparing to counter-attack from Bony with the fresh 121st Divn. Opposite the Australians the 51st Corps had all it could do to form and hold a new line. But about noon it received a special order from von Boehn, commander of the group of armies, to advance and retake H.W.L. 1. Accordingly at 1 p.m.—surely with the certainty that no such operation could be carried out—the Corps Commander ordered for 2 o'clock a counter-attack to retake the old main line along its whole front. There was to be half an hour's artillery preparation. The Australian infantry, though widely shelled, observed no definite bombardment. In any case the German infantry was late. Part of the 161st west of Bellicourt and the 28th R.I.R. farther south made a slight advance; after a second effort at 5 p.m. the 28th reached Bruyère Farm and the knuckle near Buisson-Gaulaine Farm. Apparently it was these troops that stopped the 14th Bn. from taking the support trench of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line. But if any attempts were made by the Germans to pass that line they were hopeless.



It was against the trenches reinforced by the 28th R.I.R. and 65th I.R.,⁶⁶ that is to say held by nine or ten battalions and remnants of the main garrison from farther forward, that the attack of the two weak Australian battalions at 11 p.m. was made. The 65th had been shifted to the right of the 119th Divn.'s sector. Of the 46th Australian Bn.'s attack the history of the 65th I.R. (exaggerating the efforts at resistance, but probably not the confusion) says: "On the right of II/65th an enemy battalion got into the trenches of the

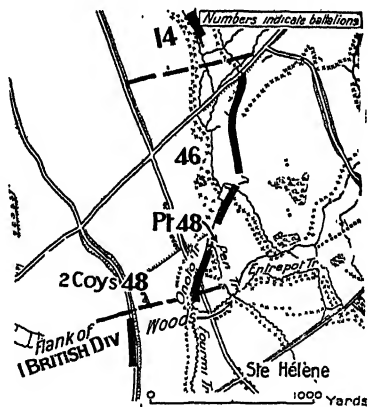
⁶⁵ This now included a battalion of the disbanded 258th R.I.R.

⁶⁶ This also had been reinforced by a disbanded battalion of 258th R.I.R.

6/46th I.R. and pushed through, divided itself, and attacked the I and II/65th in rear. Everywhere bombs cracked suddenly in the pitch dark night. No one knew what was actually happening or where the enemy was. Each company, each nest of riflemen barricaded itself off as well as it could to right and left and threw bombs at every shadow that approached. Whether it was friend or enemy was not, and could not be, distinguished."

Many of the Germans fled across the Canal and could not be brought back to the 3 (B) line until next day. A line of resistance was then organised there. The forward posts about Bruyère Farm were withdrawn except one machine-gun post. The 65th I.R. lost 3 officers and 61 men killed or wounded, but 13 officers and 440 men missing.

This achievement ensured for the Australian Corps the capture of nearly the whole "exploitation" objective. When daylight came the outposts, looking down the short gullies and knuckles to the Canal and the main Hindenburg Line beyond, realised with surprise what a commanding position they had taken. The exploitation objective had been captured on no other Corps front. The attempt of the 1st British Division at midnight failed; the tired troops reached Fourmi Trench but withdrew to the lower sunken road soon after; and though the British divisional commander constantly reported that his flank was in this position General Leane knew, by sending a patrol to the place that it was not.⁶⁷ This patrol of three



men found that the junction of Pen and Entrepot Trenches on the prominent knuckle ending the ridge was held by Germans. Pte. Woods⁶⁸ rushed these, capturing one and wounding a second. Although the post held four heavy and two light machine-guns the rest of the garrison fled. One of the patrol was wounded, and the Germans, at least thirty strong, counter-

⁶⁷ Maj. Couchman also, keeping touch with the British nearest to his headquarters, was aware of it.

⁶⁸ Pte. J. P. Woods, V.C. (No. 3244A; 48th Bn.). Vigneron; of Caversham, W.A.; h. Gawler, S.A., 2 Jan. 1891. (Woods was not accepted for enlistment in the A.I.F. until 1916. By earlier standards he was below the minimum height.)

attacked up the trenches and over the open. Some of the 48th in Pen Trench now came up, Woods, lying on the parapet while his comrades passed up bombs, holding off the Germans until this important position was secured.⁶⁹ The flank was thus safely held although the British were half a mile back near their second objective.

The victory was greater than was realised then or afterwards by the higher command, which throughout regarded the captured position as a mere forward protection of the Hindenburg Line, whereas German histories abundantly show that it was occupied as the chief position and was intended to remain so. Although part of Lempire and Ronssoy was held most of the day by the stubborn Alpine Corps, the British III Corps eventually seized most of the main German position, which was thus captured on nearly the whole front of attack north of the Omignon; the ten attacking divisions of Fourth and Third Armies took nearly 12,000 prisoners and over 100 guns. Of these the 6,800 Australian infantry,⁷⁰ machine-gunners and trench-mortar men engaged in that day's advance took 4,300 prisoners and 76 guns at a cost of 1,260 casualties to themselves.⁷¹ In reporting on the battle to Haig Rawlinson mentioned that

⁶⁹ Woods was awarded the Victoria Cross. The details here given come partly from the excellent *Story of a Battalion* by the Rev. W. Devine, Chaplain of the 48th.

⁷⁰ Including battalion headquarters.

⁷¹ Details of the loss are:

| 1st Division | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------|------|----------------------|--------|------|
| 1st Brigade | | | 3rd Brigade | | |
| | Offrs. | O.R. | | Offrs. | O.R. |
| 1st Bn. | 13 | 108 | 9th Bn. | 5 | 48 |
| 2nd Bn. | 4 | 73 | 10th Bn. | 5 | 85 |
| 3rd Bn. | 6 | 91 | 11th Bn. | 4 | 64 |
| 4th Bn. | 2 | 62 | 12th Bn. | 9 | 94 |
| 1st L.T.M. Bty. . . | — | 1 | 3rd L.T.M. Bty. . . | 1 | 2 |
| | 25 | 335 | | 24 | 293 |
| 4th Division | | | | | |
| 4th Brigade | | | 12th Brigade | | |
| | Offrs. | O.R. | | Offrs. | O.R. |
| 13th Bn. | 5 | 82 | 45th Bn. | 9 | 101 |
| 14th Bn. | 2 | 51 | 46th Bn. | 7 | 115 |
| 15th Bn. | 1 | 39 | 48th Bn. | 2 | 63 |
| 16th Bn. | 2 | 20 | 12th L.T.M. Bty. . . | 1 | 3 |
| 4th L.T.M. Bty. . . | — | 7 | | | |
| | 10 | 199 | | 19 | 282 |

The 1st M.G. Bn. lost 1 offr. and 39 o.r., and the 4th 1 offr. and 33 o.r.

German officers said that their men would not now face the Australians.

It was clear that an attack on the remaining Hindenburg defences was a feasible operation for the near future, and while the battle was still unfinished General Monash was drawing the outlines of the next plan.

But before the main Hindenburg Line could be attacked there had to be gained if possible on the IX and III Corps fronts a start-line as close as that captured by Australian Corps. During September 19th several attempts by the IX Corps failed. The 48th Battalion was shelled out of Pen Trench and the flanking strong-post, but retook them,⁷² and on the 20th occupied the support trench 400 yards ahead and sent patrols down towards the Canal.⁷³ South of this the front was not materially advanced until September 24th when IX Corps, in a set piece attack assisted by some tanks and by the extreme flank of Debeney's army, made considerable progress.⁷⁴ III Corps on the other hand sought to advance by constant attacks by all divisions on a small scale. After these had continued for two days with slight success General Butler decided to attack with his four tired divisions and a few tanks at dawn (5.40 a.m.) next day, September 21st, and asked General Monash if he would help by taking responsibility for the southern 500 yards of this attack and also swinging up his own flank. Monash agreed and at 10.30 on the 20th warned the 1st Division.

The order came at a difficult time. General Glasgow had just arranged to relieve the tired troops of the 1st Brigade;

September 21 but, as the proposed operation could only be safely carried out by men knowing the ground, it was obviously a task for that brigade. Glasgow therefore at once postponed the relief and Brig.-Genl. Iven Mackay ordered the 1st and 3rd Battalions, then in the line, to carry out the attack. The 3rd would attack from the left of its present front north-eastwards along the valley up which it had advanced on September 18th. The 1st would take over the right sector of the 3rd, and advance half a mile along the

⁷² It captured 5 prisoners and 11 machine-guns.

⁷³ Entrepot Trench was handed over to the British, who came up.

⁷⁴ Capturing 1,300 prisoners. The 46th British Div. had taken over on Sep. 22 the southern end of the Australian line.

watershed past Ruby Wood. A line of posts would then be placed across the ridge and valley 500 yards south-west of Malakoff Wood. The 10th Buffs were attacking farther to the left.

It was found possible to let half the relief proceed, the 6th Battalion taking over from the 1st, which then gathered in a sunken road south of Hargicourt for a hot meal prior to going forward again to the fight. Its reserve company, Capt. Steen's, which had lost most of its officers on the 18th, was already bivouacked in that road. During the afternoon word reached Col. Stacy that the order cancelling relief and sending the battalion into another fight was resented by the men. Capt. Moffat,⁷⁵ back at the nucleus camp, came up at once on learning of the attack. Late that night Col. Stacy learnt that the trouble was serious; the men of Steen's company refused to move. On his going up to speak to them they told him they "were not getting a fair deal," and "were being put in to do other people's work." There was widespread feeling that British troops had repeatedly failed to keep up, and that the Australians, as well as fighting on their own front, were sometimes called on to make good their neighbours' failure. Col. Stacy (according to a friend's diary) at the time attributed this protest largely to "over-mention of the troops in the newspapers, so that they over-valued themselves in comparison with others." When the order for the attack arrived the men were unaware that it was to be a minor affair. "That's pretty rough," someone would say; and one of the bad soldiers, of whom every battalion had some, probably chimed in: "Well they can bloody well go over without me." The troops were in a mood to catch this up; they were not unfriendly to their officers, but the only officers remaining in Steen's company, himself and Lieut. Blake, were just then wounded by a shell.⁷⁶ When Capt. Moffat told the men to join his company all except one⁷⁷—who had stood out all through—refused and walked to the rear. When the remaining companies assembled it was found that many other men, making 119 in all, had

⁷⁵ Capt. H. H. Moffat, M.C., 1st Bn. Grazier, of Longreach, Q'land; b. Albury, N.S.W., 14 June 1885. Died of wounds, 21 Sep. 1918.

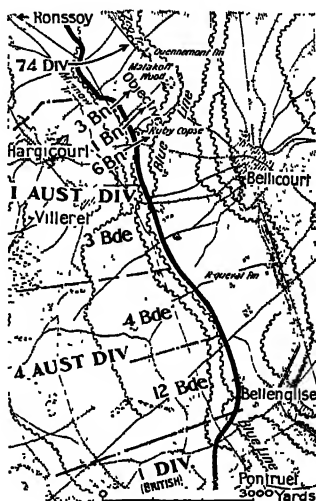
⁷⁶ Lt. S. J. Sheen (Goulburn, N.S.W.), 2nd Bn., also was wounded, mortally.

⁷⁷ Pte. J. H. Berman (No. 7829; 1st Bn.). Railway signalman; of Petersham, N.S.W.; b. Walcha, N.S.W., 16 Apr. 1886.

disappeared. Three companies totalling 10 officers and 84 men, together with Col. Stacy and all his headquarters, went forward. At Stacy's request Capt. Collingwood of the 2nd, one of the finest leaders of the A.I.F., moved up his company in closer support. The 3rd Battalion allotted to the attack only one company, Capt. McDonald's.

In the actual operation the only real difficulty proved to be the German shelling. It fell on Minnow Trench for nearly an hour before the start; and when the platoons advanced, at 5.40, it descended quickly and densely. The leading companies of the 1st, clinging to their own barrage which was excellently laid, worked along the two trenches of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line, whose garrison was still sheltering, took 85 prisoners⁷⁸ and many machine-guns, and placed their posts duly on the objective, as did McDonald's company of the 3rd in the valley. The 6th Battalion advanced a post on the right. Four machine-guns of the 1st Company were emplaced in the posts. Coming through the German barrage with his company in support, the gallant Moffat was mortally wounded.

The 74th Division reached the wire of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line at Quennemont Farm, but farther north the tired divisions of III Corps failed at most points to secure the old second objective. Before noon the Germans counter-attacked the 74th, and cut off some of the advanced troops. The rest fell back to behind the old second objective. Capt. McDonald (3rd Bn.), whose posts in the valley were now overlooked, withdrew them to Minnow Trench, but the 1st Battalion held all its posts on the height.⁷⁹



⁷⁸ Many prisoners were hit passing through their own barrage.

⁷⁹ Collingwood had dribbled his company through the barrage to Minnow Trench, where Col. Stacy also was. Stacy's headquarters did not have to be used in the attack.

The German regiments concerned looked upon the British attack this day as a major one. The Australians were opposed by parts of the 3rd and 59th R.I.R. (1st Res. Divn.) on the right, and of the 60th I.R. and 7th R.I.R. (121st Divn.) on the left. The 21st Divn. was moved up from support, but was not required.

Early that morning the 13th, 15th⁸⁰ and 10th Battalions also advanced some of their posts between Haute Bruyère and Gaulaine Farms where the Germans still had a post on the high ground,⁸¹ and farther south. The enemy post soon afterwards withdrew.

The 1st and 4th Australian Divisions were now relieved and went to the rear⁸² for the "Corps" rest for which they had been hoping since July. General Monash had also insisted that the three remaining Australian divisions must go into rest after the next battle.

While he was in the thick of preparation for that offensive, another sharp trouble, though much less serious than it might appear to non-Australians, descended on him. The Army Council in London was concerned at the depletion of the Australian infantry through lack of reinforcements. It pointed out that the 57 Australian battalions were 8,500 men short, and that reinforcement drafts for the next four months, estimated at 3,000 monthly, would be insufficient to keep up even the present strength. Battalions which entered the battle with 300-400 men were in some important respects uneconomic, requiring the same staff as a battalion that took in 750. In the British Army this difficulty had been met by disbanding the fourth battalion in each infantry brigade; a similar measure had long before been adopted by the French and Germans, and this policy had already been approved for the A.I.F. in February: Battalions had been earmarked for disbandment but, in view of the extreme reluctance expressed by the Australian Government, it was to be carried out only gradually as it became unavoidable. Three battalions had been thus disbanded in the spring; Haig entirely accepted the Australian Government's condition, but in June he pointed out that of the 57 remaining

⁸⁰ These had relieved the 14th.

⁸¹ This post lay opposite a shallow unoccupied part of the Hindenburg Outpost Support Line. Two men of the 10th trying to make contact with the 14th there had been captured by the Germans.

⁸² As the 11th Bn. was marching through Roisel on the night of Sep. 23 a German aeroplane dropped a bomb near its headquarters staff, who were on horseback. Maj. A. H. Darnell and Lt. J. A. Archibald (Kalgoorlie, W.A.), his adjutant, were both mortally wounded. The battalion itself was moving across country near by and escaped.

battalions 5 now had less than 700 men, 17 less than 800 and only 11 more than 900, which was the strength then laid down as minimum. He considered this "a rather alarming degree of unevenness." Birdwood (as G.O.C., A.I.F.) explained that there were still hopes of keeping the battalions at 900 and that they were disbanded only when so weak as to be inefficient as fighting units. On August 29th the Army Council drafted a letter to Haig saying that, in view of the shortage then evident, it considered that the reduction of the remaining four-battalion brigades to three-battalion ones should be carried out as soon as possible. Before sending this letter it passed the draft to A.I.F. Headquarters for comment, and Birdwood asked Monash for his views. Both realised that the step would cause intense heart-burning, and Monash, even now that his battalions were going into battle 300-400 strong, urged that it should be postponed till the new year.

It is not likely that weather conditions will permit of our carrying on for much longer at the same intense pressure at which the Corps has been going for the last five months, (he wrote to Birdwood on Sep. 7). In all probability if we carry on, at latest till the end of October, we ought to be able to carry on right over the winter.

It was possible, he added, that G.H.Q. might then be able to do "what we all desire"—keep the Australian Corps entirely out of the line for the four winter months. Australian battalions had never been so effective as in the last month when they were all far below strength; he urged that 750 should be considered a sufficient strength even for next year.

I welcome any pretext (he said to a friend on Sep. 8th) to take the fewest possible men into action. So long as they have thirty Lewis guns (per battalion) it doesn't very much matter what else they have.

And it was true that the A.I.F. battalions, entering these great battles with 300-400 rifles,⁸⁸ still attacked on fronts of 850-1,000 yards, and had even attacked on fronts of up to a mile. Carrying parties could not be provided; Lewis gun teams were reduced to two men, and Vickers gun crews could no longer carry full loads of ammunition. These and the food supplies had to go by pack or waggon, and in recent fights

⁸⁸ A battalion of 750 would not have many more, allowing for a nucleus, transport, and men detached on various duties.

this had worked very well.⁸⁴ Monash asked to be allowed to reorganise his battalions on a three company basis, but he well knew that most of them had already done this for themselves, and reduced their companies to three or even two platoons. Finally he asked to be allowed discretion to recommend the disbanding of "one or more battalions" if he and his generals found it advantageous.⁸⁵ Birdwood insisted on prompter action, pointing out that the principle had already been determined in January. He and Monash now agreed that it should not yet be applied to the four original brigades, but he informed the War Office that it would be applied in all un-reduced brigades as soon as found necessary.

It was immediately after this that Monash learnt of the coming withdrawal of "1914 men" (estimated by him at "upwards of 6,000") on furlough to Australia, which obviously would render the disbandments more urgent. The battalions selected by divisional commanders on the advice of their brigadiers were the 19th, 21st,⁸⁶ 25th, 37th, 42nd, 54th and 60th;⁸⁷ and on September 23rd the order went out for their immediate disbandment: in each case their records, and a few representatives were to go to training battalions on Salisbury Plain, whose companies would assume the battalions' names, but the rest would reinforce some other battalion or battalions of their own brigade.

To officers and men of these battalions the blow was overwhelming. The step might be necessary—but why should *their* battalion be chosen. Men and even officers held among themselves indignant meetings. In the first battalion to hear of its fate, the 37th, Col. Story, a fine leader, took the step of protesting not merely to the brigadier, but over his head to Gellibrand, Monash and Birdwood, a serious breach of discipline. Moreover in the bitterness of the moment Story's

⁸⁴ On Sep. 18 the troops on the first objective had a hot meal soon after they got there, and many troops on the final objective were given one as soon as it was dark. The 2nd Bn. secured a German cooker and used it to take hot drinks for the whole battalion around its line of posts.

⁸⁵ Br.-Gen. Robertson (6th Bde.) wrote that the step "will cause heart-burning; still all recognise the futility of attempting to carry on under present conditions." Gen. Rosenthal (2nd Div.) wrote: "I most strongly urge that . . . authority be given to me to have it carried into effect in all brigades at once."

⁸⁶ Including the "Brewery Company" described in *Chapter I*.

⁸⁷ The reorganisation of the 8th Bde. was postponed apparently because, Gen. Hobbs being in England, his approval to the disbandment of the 29th Bn. had not been obtained.

letter was foolishly drawn, disparaging sister units. He was relieved of his command, but his attitude had become widely known. At a meeting the men of the 37th agreed that on the final parade they would obey every order but the last—the order to march to their new battalions. On September 22nd, when that parade took place, they did so, obeying every command but the final one. Brig.-Genl. McNicoll was then summoned and spoke to the men, but with the same result. The officers then reluctantly obeyed an order to fall out; after them the sergeants did the same—and one corporal and one private. The remainder were told that, if they did not join their new units that afternoon, they would be posted as absent without leave. Being left to themselves they at once re-established strict military form in the battalion, choosing from their own number commanders to carry on temporarily the absent officers' duties. It was noticeable that those selected were not the "bad hats" or of the demagogue type, but the men most fitted to lead in action,⁸⁸ and strict discipline was maintained. The battalion marched back to its huts; men already in detention for various offences were retained under guard; the medical aid-post was re-formed by the orderlies, and church parade for next day arranged with the padre, who went with the men. The "commanders" had meals with the men, rations being obtained through the support of other units who "lost" occasional boxes of food from their own waggon-loads as they passed near by.

There was keen sympathy for these troops throughout the force and, one after the other, the other selected battalions, when ordered to disband (mostly on September 24th and 25th) took the same action. General Gellibrand had asked for representatives of the 37th to meet him, and later went to the camp and talked the matter over with the men in a friendly, informal way. Monash also spoke quietly to representatives of the 37th, and battalion commanders and brigadiers addressed all the recalcitrant battalions. The men's argument was the same in every case and was entirely sincere.

Look Colonel (said those of the 25th to Col. Davis) the 25th from the first has been built on *esprit de corps*. We have been taught that the regiment is everything. You have often told us

⁸⁸ The chief commander was a corporal.

that we must sacrifice everything for its honour. We have always obeyed you and we always will—in everything but what you now ask. We cannot obey you in this just for that reason—we would sacrifice everything for the battalion.

They told General Wisdom that it was their unanimous wish to go into the next battle and to be given the hardest task: there would either be no 25th left to break up, or they would leave such a record as would make it impossible to break them up. All the resisting battalions said they were keen to enter the great attack that they knew to be impending, but they demanded to be allowed to go in with their identity unchanged. A point elicited by Gellibrand was that the amalgamation of two battalions would be much less keenly felt than the extinction (in the field) of one of them.

Some units were clearly affected by their commanders' arguments, the strongest of which was that they could not indefinitely resist, which the men knew to be true; but only one battalion gave way. It is a tribute to the unrivalled hold of Brig.-Genl. "Pompey" Elliott on the loyalty of his men that the 60th Battalion, after disobeying its commander's order to join the 59th, agreed to do so upon being addressed by this beloved stout-hearted Australian. What was Elliott's disgust when next morning, September 27th, he learnt that the other battalions were being allowed to go into the coming battle intact. As the great offensive was only a few days distant Monash had urged upon Rawlinson that the disbandment should be deferred for a fortnight, and asked him to press this upon Haig. The news of the order, says a record of the 21st Battalion, "was received with deafening cheers." Naturally trouble at once recurred in the 60th, but Elliott again addressed it. "By using my influence to the utmost," he wrote in his diary, "I managed to sway the men over the line. My brigade is the only one in which the reorganisation was successfully accomplished."

This incident has been called that of "the mutinies over disbandment," and so in the strict sense of the terms it was; but the refusal was not treated as mutiny by any authority, Australian or British. In contrast to the mutiny in the 1st Battalion, it had its origin in some of the best men and finest qualities of the A.I.F. Australian soldiers had experienced few

ties of loyalty in their civil lives; and a public loyalty once conceived was sustained with a flaming zeal disconcerting to those who had encouraged it. If, as General Brudenell White always strongly wished, it had been possible to tie the A.I.F. battalions oversea to the corresponding regiments of the citizen forces in Australia, so that the home regiment fed battalions or even companies overseas as in the New Zealand force, this trouble would probably never have arisen. But the A.I.F. was an improvised force and the disbandment of a battalion carried too many of the consequences of its extinction.

Mutiny was one of the only two offences punishable in the A.I.F. by death.⁸⁹ No man was punished for his part in the disbandment mutiny. The mutiny in the 1st Battalion was in a totally different category. The men who refused duty, 119 in number, were tried and, with one exception, found guilty, not of joining in a mutiny, but of desertion. The ending of hostilities caused General Monash not to enforce the penalties,⁹⁰ and almost certainly saved him and the A.I.F. from having to face difficult problems whose solution would have called for not only tact but the highest qualities of wisdom, leadership and moral courage. Monash had some of these. In this decisive fighting, for such it was, he was right to work his troops to the extreme limit of their endurance, which normally is beyond the limit to which men themselves think they can endure. At such times victory often goes to the troops that hold out longest, withstanding strain, toil or exhaustion in perhaps unbelievable degree and for an unbelievable time; and the value of different armies depends largely upon how far they are ready to do this. On the other hand students of history may doubt whether mere eagerness for military prestige could ever, as Monash apparently imagined, maintain the will to such sacrifices, or could be wisely substituted for the high aims of justice and humanity in implanting a motive for which ordinary men, in such a war, will readily die.

⁸⁹ The other was desertion to the enemy. It was doubtful whether an Australian soldier even when guilty of murder could receive a death penalty.

⁹⁰ Gen. Glasgow would not recommend remittance of the sentences, though Gen. Monash tried to induce him to do so, and the condemned men followed the 1st Div. about for many weeks. Apparently remittance was finally recommended by Gen. Hobbs.

CHAPTER XX

THE HINDENBURG LINE

HAIG had been warned from London on September 1st that the War Cabinet, disturbed by industrial troubles,¹ would be rendered very anxious if he incurred heavy loss in attacking the Hindenburg Line *without success*. As in such warfare no commander could attack with certainty of success this meant that he must attack, if at all, at his own risk. He was careful not to authorise action till his army commanders were fully confident of success, but he himself felt certain that now, if ever, was the time to overcome this great obstacle. He, first of all the Allied leaders, believed that by sufficient effort now the war could be won in 1918.² Consequently, on the day following the warning he attacked the junction of the Hindenburg and Drocourt-Quéant lines in the north. This, for the time being, was his main thrust and was pushed towards Cambrai. Next, on September 15th, when facing or approaching the Hindenburg Line along the Scheldt and Nord Canals³ he decided—

After Rawlinson's attack (probably on the 18th) we should know more about the nature of the Hindenburg Line Defences and how they are held. My present view is that the main attack will be made by Rawlinson against the canal tunnel with the object of reaching Busigny.

Apart from Haig's statements the student can always tell which operations he regarded as the main ones by noting to what sector he directed the cavalry, which, as ever since the Somme offensive in 1916, he was still hoping to "put through."

Rawlinson had begun to plan provisionally the attack on the Hindenburg main line even before his army assaulted the

¹ The London police strike occurred on Aug. 30 and the railway strike on Sep. 24.

² On Aug. 21 and Sep. 8 he told this to Winston Churchill.

³ At Gouzeaucourt on Third Army's front the Hindenburg Line crossed from the Scheldt Canal to the Nord Canal.

Hindenburg Outpost-Line on September 18th. Unquestionably he wished to make the main attack with the Australian Corps. But Monash told him that the battle of the 18th would be the last that the 1st and 4th Divisions would be fit to undertake before being given the period of rest that was obviously their due.⁴ The 3rd and 5th Divisions had been relieved only a week ago and required at least another week to fit them for a big attack. As for the 2nd, after the capture of Mont St. Quentin Monash had promised to rest it until late in September. Thus when the 1st and 4th Divisions were withdrawn soon after September 18th there must elapse about a week before the 3rd and 5th Divisions, or the 2nd behind them, would be ready to attack. Monash told Rawlinson that if the Australian Corps was to hold the front and then attack the main defences in the tunnel sector—where, as all authorities agreed, they had been specially strengthened because of the absence of the canal obstacle and the consequent probability of attack there—he must ask for the loan of two strong divisions to replace the 1st and 4th.

To this suggestion Rawlinson made the highly interesting answer that he might be able to obtain, very soon, the II American Corps of two divisions—27th and 30th. These were the only American divisions now remaining in the British zone. They had been training with the Second British Army and were now in G.H.Q. Reserve, their Corps being available for any service desired. They would have to be supplied with artillery as their own was training elsewhere; also they had never yet been engaged in a major battle. Would Monash accept the responsibility for taking them under his command and employing them to reinforce his corps for breaking through the Hindenburg Line?

Monash leapt at the proposal.

I had no reason to hesitate (he writes). My experience of the quality of the American troops, both at the Battle of Hamel and on the Chipilly spur, had been eminently satisfactory. . . . Measures were possible to supply them with any technical guidance which they might lack. I therefore accepted the suggestion, and Rawlinson then asked me to submit a proposal for a joint operation to take place towards the end of the month by these two American and the remaining three Australian

⁴ According to a note in an unofficial diary Monash himself thought the 4th Div. might be in a position to continue fighting after a short rest.

divisions, with the object of completing the task, so well begun, of breaking through the Hindenburg defences.⁵

Everyone else felt equally confident. Compared with the Australian and most British divisions the American ones were completely fresh, and in man-power each nearly equalled two British divisions. Each had twelve strong battalions of infantry and three times as many machine-gun companies as a British division and twice as many engineers. Their men had much the same physique and bold, free, aggressive appearance that marked the Australians; indeed their obvious affinity made this a particularly suitable combination. Most Australians felt as Monash did, that the fresh spirit and numerical strength of the Americans would make up for their lack of experience, and that in combination they and the Australians would strike a very formidable blow.

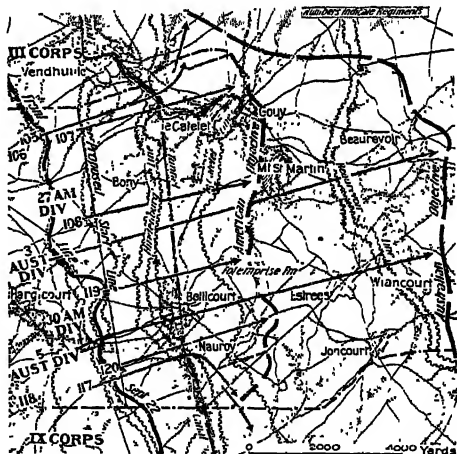
Monash set to work on his plan, apparently, on the day of the Outpost-Line battle. The task of developing it, he says, "proved at once the most arduous, the most responsible, and the most difficult" that he undertook during the war. On this occasion, much more than on August 8th, Rawlinson relied upon him to shape the plan on which Fourth Army ultimately fought. Events that followed make it unnecessary here to explain the scheme in great detail. Briefly it was as follows.

Monash assumed—it proved a most dangerous assumption—that opposite the tunnel the Hindenburg Outpost-Line would be captured either on the 18th or soon after. This would give him a straight starting line, with the main Hindenburg Line from half a mile to a mile ahead. The tunnel must be considered as a bridge, 6,000 yards wide, over the canal. Here the Hindenburg Line, elsewhere behind the canal, bulged forward 400-1,200 yards west of the canal's alignment, but the line of the tunnel was actually marked on the surface by the ragged green mound of spoil—about ten feet high and as wide as a road—that had been hauled to the surface through shafts when it was dug in the time of the great Napoleon. The canal, coming from the south up a branch of the Omignon valley, plunges first into a wide, deep cutting and then tunnels into the higher land forming the upper course

⁵ *Australian Victories*, pp. 235-6.

at the tunnel sector only. To cross the canal unaided, he held would involve great loss of life; he would not have committed the Australian troops to the attempt, and did not suggest the task for others. He proposed to attack over the "bridge" in two stages: first under a creeping artillery barrage to seize the Hindenburg Line, the tunnel mound, and the support (le Catelet) line—an advance of 4,400 yards; then to pass other troops through to seize by "open warfare" the Beurevoir Line and village, about the same distance beyond. To protect his flanks and also to help the British corps north and south of him to cross the canal, additional forces would in the first stage follow each flank, to thrust out a short distance southward and northward after the line of the canal had been passed. In the second stage other reserves would pass through to extend the flanks farther, increasing the opportunity for the British and enlarging the "bridgehead."

For the straightforward advance in the first stage, behind a creeping barrage, Monash allotted the two American divisions, and for the "exploitation" in the second phase the 5th and 3rd Australian Divisions. The Americans would be helped by 60 tanks and a creeping barrage from 17 field artillery brigades. In this stage the successive obstacles and the objective lay mainly at right angles to the thrust; the Ameri-



cans were strong enough to furnish the supporting units required for mopping up the numerous trenches. The second stage, without any barrage, would require more experienced troops. He asked for 30 tanks to help the Australians.

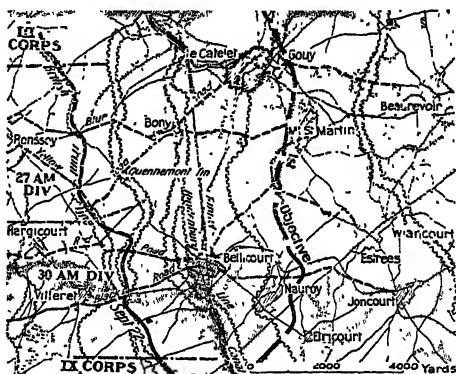
The principles on which Monash based his plan were simple, but some of the circumstances obviously made the task set for the Americans exceedingly difficult. First, the main advance, though straight to the objective, must overcome a section of the most powerful defences in existence—comprising five or six successive trenches, the main ones ten feet wide and seven or eight feet deep, with concrete blockhouses and tunnelled dugouts, the open ground between being crossed by belts of dense wire. Second, the 4,400 yards' advance in this stage meant, as General Monash explained to the Australian war correspondents on the day before the action, "a deeper penetration than we have ever had before." Third, the flank operations must be made by American regiments following behind the flanks of the main attack till it passed over the line of the tunnel and then changing direction—and such changes were recognised as a difficult task in battle. Finally, it was known that the Germans had moored barges in the tunnel as barracks, and had excavated many stairways to it from Bellicourt and the area around. It was expected that considerable forces might shelter in the tunnel and try to emerge after the Americans had passed. Consequently the Americans must leave guards at every stairway besides clearing trenches and dugouts and barricading flanks. Eventually, to give time for this, there was allowed a pause of 15 minutes when the barrage reached 500 yards beyond the tunnel.

The task thus allotted to the Americans by Monash was at least as great as any that he had ever set for Australian divisions, if not greater. But the whole plan was based on the premise that the Germans' morale was progressively falling. In the test of this on September 18th their behaviour when attacked by Australians hardly deserved the name of resistance. They would now, of course, expect to be attacked on the tunnel front, but Rawlinson and Monash both held that the loss of surprise could be made up for by subjecting the garrison to several days of preliminary bombardment. The chief aim of this was to prevent the bringing up of food and supplies. It would also help to smash the wire and defences but no attempt would be made to flatten trenches or demolish pill-boxes.

Monash did not believe that the Germans in their present condition would offer any resistance after such a bombardment. To help the Americans to overcome any deficiencies in technical knowledge he proposed to attach to them as advisers an "Australian Mission" of 83 officers and 127 N.C.O's of the 1st and 4th Divisions, chosen as experts in various branches.⁷

Monash suggested that after the "bridgehead" had been seized by the Americans and Australians parts of the IX and III Corps should pass through it and clear the canal banks north and south to enable the rest of those corps to cross. The eastward advance by all corps would then be resumed. But on this battlefield—at least from Quennemont and Cologne Farms to Bellicourt—the Australians would, for the first time in 1918, have to move over a crater field resembling in patches those of Passchendaele and the Somme. Four

divisions of infantry with their tanks, artillery, and engineers would have to pass over the "bridge" during the first morning, and after or with them the infantry, tanks and artillery of other army corps, and possibly

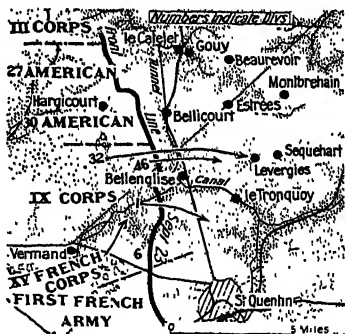


armoured cars and cavalry. The making of roads through the sector was therefore of basic importance, as was the marshalling of traffic along them. Monash drafted by his own hand the orders relating to all this, and allotted all the American engineers (102nd and 105th Regiments), together with the pioneers of the 3rd and 5th Australian Divisions for the task of preparing four roads, marked on the map as the Black, Red, Yellow and Blue roads. Before the battle these would be completed to the

⁷ Maj.-Gen. MacLagan, commander of the Mission, Lt.-Cols. Harry Murray, A. M. Ross and a few others went to II American Corps H.Q.; Br.-Gen. Brand, Lt.-Cols. Crowther and Salisbury and 106 others of the 4th Div. went to the 27th Amer. Div. and Br.-Gen. Iven Mackay, Lt.-Col. Herrod and a similar party from the 1st Div. to the 30th. Maj. R. H. Norman, G. S. Cook, R. Kerr, and J. S. S. Anderson also were members of the Mission.

farthest points then attainable and marked with posts, each of the proper colour. On the day of battle, immediately the American infantry advanced, the pioneers and engineers would begin extending their roads across the new-won ground.⁸ Assuming that the Americans started at 6 a.m. and reached their objective (the "Green Line") about 10, the roadmakers, using old roads and filling in trenches instead of bridging them, should by 2 p.m. have them ready for the infantry and artillery of the 3rd and 5th Divisions to march over the old battlefield and continue the advance to the final objective (Red Line).⁹ Each of these divisions would be supported by three brigades of artillery which would march up with it, taking no part in the barrage. Paths through the wire of the Beaurevoir Line, the final German trench-system, would be beaten down by tanks.

This plan in outline was submitted to Rawlinson on September 18th, and at a conference next day at Monash's headquarters the army commander accepted it with one vital alteration—he approved also of a plan of the IX Corps for throwing one of its divisions across the canal at the Bellenlise salient and then a second division through it. The other two would make a flank west of the canal, facing southwards until the attacking divisions had opened a crossing for them by seizing the smaller tunnel at le Tronquoy farther south, where the French would go through later. On the northern flank, if the Americans and Australians succeeded, III Corps would follow them into the bridgehead and then, attacking northwards behind the canal, would open a way for the crossing of V Corps (Third Army). Rawlinson also proposed to give the Americans 86 tanks (4th Brigade), the Australians 76 (5th Brigade) and some whippets, and the IX Corps 24 (9th Bn.) and some whippets. Monash would have



⁸ The 1st and 2nd Aust. Tunnelling Coys. would then maintain the roads.

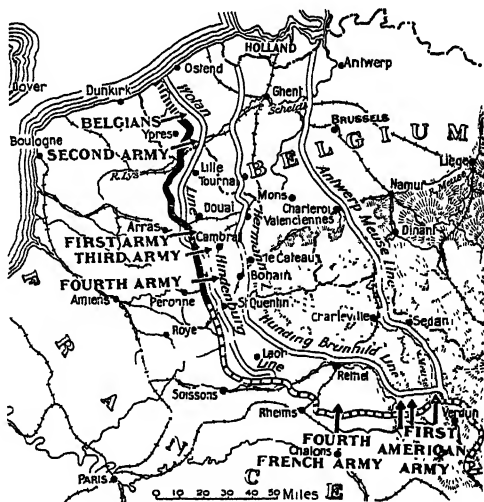
⁹ The tanks would as far as possible march beside the roads. By the time half a dozen tanks had passed along a roadside, Monash noted, their path should be hard enough for mule traffic.

the 17th (Armoured Car) Battalion to push through (supported by some whippets) and raid the railway bridges at Busigny and le Cateau. Rawlinson believed that an opportunity for putting through the cavalry and the main force of whippets would occur when the Beaufort Line was broken.

Rawlinson sent this proposal to Haig the same day. He said that it had now been proved that the morale of the German infantry facing Fourth Army was steadily deteriorating and he did not think they would stand forty-eight hours' bombardment. Nearly all the ground necessary for attacking the main Hindenburg Line had been gained—he expected III and IX Corps to secure the rest within a few days. Therefore an attack on the Hindenburg Line between Vendhuile and St. Quentin within the next ten days had every prospect of success.

Haig was then preparing the British strokes that would form part of the mighty autumn offensive which Foch had long planned and must soon launch. The

Americans had already struck, at the "hernia" of St. Mihiel on September 12th, their preliminary blow; the Germans had expected it and had decided to withdraw, but it found them still in position and resulted in the capture of 16,000 prisoners. But on the 26th French and American



forces would launch between the Meuse and Rheims a greater offensive, aiming ultimately at the river crossings at Mezières and Sedan.¹⁰ At Foch's request Haig had arranged with the Belgian staff that the Belgian army, reinforced by

¹⁰ Mezières and Charleville are practically the same town. For the origin of Foch's plan see pp. 470 et seq.

several French divisions and, on the right, by part of General Plumer's Second British Army, should begin a powerful attack in Flanders at the same time.¹¹ The next stroke in Haig's main thrust between St. Quentin and Cambrai would also be part—indeed a vital one—of Foch's grand offensive. Haig now adopted Rawlinson's plan as that of his main stroke, to be delivered when the other blows had drawn away German reserves. The Cavalry Corps would be stationed behind Rawlinson's front and the 5th Cavalry Brigade would be allotted to him for putting through immediately the last trench-line was broken—Rawlinson allotted the brigade to Monash.

Accordingly, when on September 23rd Foch called on Haig, it was arranged that the strokes should follow one another thus:

By French and Americans between the Meuse and Rheims—Sep. 26.

By First Brit. Army and left of Third about Cambrai—Sep. 27.

By Belgians, French and British in Flanders—Sep. 28.

By Fourth Brit. Army with right of Third and left of First French Army—Sep. 29.

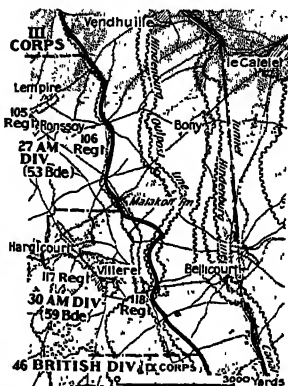
Foch agreed that when the right of Fourth Army had seized the smaller (le Tronquoy) tunnel the First French Army should pass troops over it to encircle St. Quentin. The II American Corps, then in G.H.Q. Reserve about Beauquesne, was informed on September 19th that its two divisions would probably be required to join in a British offensive against the Hindenburg Line near Ronssoy. It was to attack as a corps, but Maj.-General Read, its commander, placed himself under General Monash, and allowed him to send orders to the American divisions direct, thus temporarily eliminating himself from their tactical control.¹² The decision was extraordinarily generous and also wise, since, for the control of such an operation, Read and his staff then lacked the experience which action in this battle in combination with the Australians would certainly help them to gain.

To be in position to deliver the main attack, Australian Corps would have to side-slip northwards. Accordingly on the

¹¹ To conform with Belgian law the operation had to come under the command of the King of the Belgians (who indeed strongly favoured the plan though his staff did not); but he would be assisted by the French general, Degoutte.

¹² The American Corps Headquarters were placed not far from those of Australian Corps near Belloy-en-Santerre.

night of September 24th the III Corps was relieved, except for the northernmost 2,000 yards of its front, by the 27th American Division. Farther south the 4th and 1st Australian Divisions respectively. By September 25th the Australian Corps was in control of the new front with the 30th and 27th American Divisions in line¹³ facing the "bridge" they were to capture. Each American division contained two brigades, each brigade comprising two infantry regiments and each regiment three battalions, the *regiment* thus corresponding to the British brigade. Monash had arranged that each division should at this stage put only one regiment of one brigade into the line. When the time came, the second brigade would attack with both its regiments, the unused regiment of the first brigade following to make the flank thrusts to south and north, and the used line-regiment concentrating after the attack had gone through and following as reserve.



But a serious complication had already arisen. Although the Hindenburg Outpost-Line, the intended start-line for the great attack, had been reached on September 18th in the sector then held by the Australian Corps and since taken over by the 46th British and 30th American Divisions, the III British Corps, opposite the tunnel, had not gained it. The British had attacked almost daily and, though reaching portions of the objective, had always been beaten back, and still held in most parts only the second objective of September 18th.¹⁴

The preliminary attack

Haig on September 23rd laid down that the intended start-line must be captured before the Americans were put in, but General Butler told Rawlinson that his divisions were too exhausted to do it. It was suggested that a fresh division, the 66th, should be rushed up to take

¹³ For the first time since 7 Apr. 1916 no part of the Western Front was held by Australian infantry.

¹⁴ They held a little more on the right, a little less on the centre.

the ground, but Butler thought it would fail. Rawlinson had accordingly held to the programme and brought in the Americans although the start-line was not taken, and Haig approved this decision. The rôle of III Corps in the offensive was changed; it would merely advance on a narrow front—2,000 yards—on the flank of the Americans as far as the canal. From that point the XIII Corps, coming in with three fresh divisions, would take up the III Corps' task.

The practice of fixing a starting line before the ground for it was won had thus proved dangerous. Four days before the offensive that ground in the left sector was still in German hands. In this difficulty Monash asked Rawlinson¹⁵ for permission to alter the main plan by bringing back the starting line to the front taken over by the 27th American Division. Rawlinson, however, thought that any change at this stage would confuse Monash's intricate plans; the Americans therefore must seize the start-line in a preliminary operation.

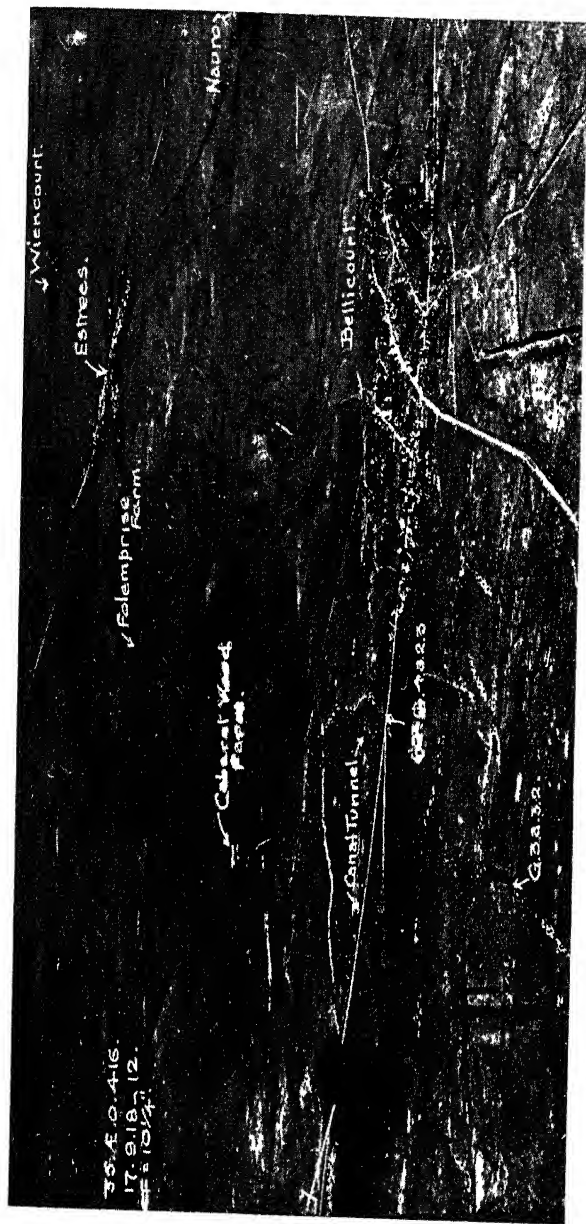
The Australian Mission joined the Americans on September 24th. The American divisional commanders, Maj.-Generals O'Ryan¹⁶ (27th) and Lewis¹⁷ (30th), had been warned of the plans by their corps commander, General Read, on September 19th, and on the 23rd he gave them a bare outline. On the 25th Monash called into conference the three American commanders, the chiefs of their staffs, and the Australian divisional commanders and, in one of the brilliantly illuminating expositions of which he was a master, explained to them in great detail the plan of operations including that for the preliminary one. As he could not afford to use the troops reserved for the main operation, the preliminary attack must be made by the regiment then holding the 27th Division's front. General O'Ryan, who felt some anxiety owing to the width of that front, was told that he could use a second regiment in support. This attack would be made on September 27th.

These were days of intense pressure for Monash. Guns and ammunition for the big offensive had to be moved up; the two American and three Australian divisions marched by

¹⁵ See *Australian Victories*, p. 250.

¹⁶ Maj.-Gen. John F. O'Ryan, D.S.M. Commanded 27th Div. A.E.F., 1917-19. Lawyer; and Police Commissioner of New York City, 1934; b. New York City, 21 Aug. 1874. (Awarded Brit. K.C.M.G. and C.V.O.)

¹⁷ Maj.-Gen. Edward M. Lewis, D.S.M. Commanded 30th Div. A.E.F., 1918-19; b. New Albany, Indiana, U.S.A., 10 Dec. 1863. (Awarded Brit. K.C.M.G.)



49. BELLICOURT AND THE HINDENBURG LINE

Three lines of the main Hindenburg system can be seen before the village (the dark streaks beside them indicate wire). The mound over the Tunnel can be faintly seen north of Bellicourt. Close in front of Cabaret Wood Farm is part of the second (le Catelet) line which ran thence to west of Nauroy. The Beurevoir Line lay just beyond Estrées. Note the U-curve of the railway north-east of Bellicourt. (The dark line in foreground is a sunken road)



50. PART OF THE MAIN HINDENBURG WIRE DEFENCES NEAR BONY

The view is northward. The front trench can be seen to the right of the wire.

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. E3481
Taken on 3rd October, 1918.



51. THE ST. QUENTIN CANAL SOUTH OF BELLICOURT

This obstacle was crossed in the magnificent attack by the 46th British Division.

Aust War Memorial Official Photo. No. E3516
Taken on 3rd October, 1918.

To face p. 953.

stages to the front while the 1st and 4th Australian Divisions moved back; 1914 men for Anzac leave were drafted out; the "mutinies" in seven battalions over their disbandment were resolved; and two parties of Mr. Hughes's distinguished visitors were entertained. At that juncture someone heard that 30,000 rounds of the mustard-gas shell, which Britain was now producing, were reaching France, and this whole consignment was obtained for the big bombardment. It was thought that the Germans would be confused by this first use of their own implement against them. Fortunately the system of railways behind the Corps was particularly good. Those to and beyond Péronne had been very rapidly opened and railheads were only a few miles behind the front, at Hargicourt and Vermand and near Epéhy.¹⁸ The roads in the area immediately behind the front were constantly crowded with infantry, the Americans in their closely fitting collars, jackets and canvas gaiters, carrying packs resembling the "swags" of the Australian bush, the Australians in their loose tunics, generally more carefree in movement and attitude, but otherwise closely resembling them.

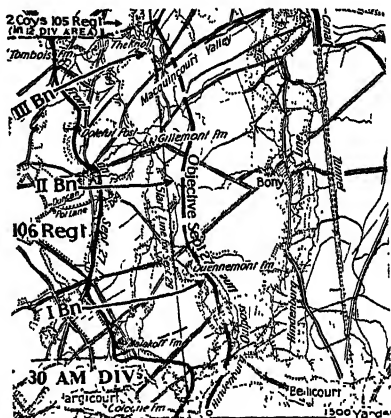
The 27th Division attacked the Hindenburg Outpost-Line at 5.30 on September 27th. It had to advance 1,000-1,500 yards on a front of slightly over 4,000 yards. It attacked with the three battalions of the 106th Regiment (53rd Brigade), helped by twelve tanks (a company of the 4th Tank Battalion), behind a creeping barrage laid by nine brigades of artillery and including fifteen per cent. of smoke shell. The flanks were to be covered by minor advances by the 30th American Division on the right and by patrols of the 12th Division (III Corps) on the left. Two companies of the 105th Infantry were allotted to advance behind the left of the 106th and hold a defensive flank.

This attack, like the first stage of the greater one that was to follow, belongs to American history.¹⁹ It need only be said here that soon after the three battalions advanced, with three

¹⁸ Use had been made of the single Albert-Ham line (now broad gauge), as well as the double line from Villers-Bretonneux through Chaulnes to Brie, Péronne and Tincourt. Light railways also ran from Maricourt to Péronne, Roisel, and Vermand, from Mons-en-Chaussée to Vermand, and elsewhere.

¹⁹ It is described in Gen. O'Ryan's excellent *Story of the 27th Division* on which the present narrative is largely based.

eminences in the Hindenburg Outpost-Line—Quennemont Farm, Gillemont Farm, and the Knoll—as main objectives for troops and tanks, success signals at the Knoll were seen; prisoners—eventually 250—came in, and, at 9.30, it was reported that the right and centre battalions also were on their objectives though bombing was continuous at Gillemont and Quennemont Farms. At 10.30 the situation at the Knoll was reported to be very obscure. "Chief trouble is shortage of officers forward. Some companies apparently have no officers at all." About noon Germans were reported²⁰ to be in Gillemont Farm and III Corps said that the Knoll also had been lost. Yet reports from the air and from men returning wounded and unwounded, led to the belief that the 27th Division still held most of its objective. At dusk (6.15) it reported that the objective was still held though some German machine-gun posts in rear had not yet been mopped up.²¹ At the front it had long been evident that Germans were now in some of their former positions, apparently behind the advanced American line; and the impression grew that, in spite of special warnings from Monash and its own leaders, the 106th, when advancing that morning, had failed to clear trenches and dug-outs, leaving Germans to emerge behind it with their machine-guns.



It was thought that after dusk patrols might connect with the Americans, who were believed to be holding the objective, and that the intervening Germans could be cleared. But that night the brigade (54th) for the big attack was to take over

²⁰ By the 4th Aust. Div. Artillery and by Maj. J. L. Kincaid, II/106th.

²¹ Australian Corps informed Fourth Army that an officer back from the line said that the Knoll, Gillemont Farm, and Quennemont Farm were "definitely ours," but that pockets of Germans remained and were now being cleared.

the line;²² and neither then nor during next morning could its patrols get past the German machine-gun posts in the trenches originally held by the Germans. Airmen sent to locate the advanced Americans came back with conflicting reports.²³

Only on the morning of the 28th was it recognised that the starting line laid down in Monash's plan would probably not be reached before the great offensive at dawn next day. The question immediately arose whether the barrage for the 27th Division's attack should be brought back so as closely to precede the advance, accepting the risk that it would fall on any Americans that were still in front. If this was not done, the attacking troops must start far behind the barrage and try without its help to clear the machine-gun posts ahead and eventually to catch it up. This question was earnestly discussed by O'Ryan and the chief of his staff, Col. Ford,²⁴ at a conference at the headquarters of Brig.-Genl. Pierce,²⁵ 54th American Brigade, at noon. What advice the American leaders had received from their Australian advisers is not known, but experience indicated that the isolated Americans would almost certainly themselves have been "mopped up" by now. Probably the Americans would have asked for the division's barrage to be brought back and the attack there launched earlier than elsewhere,²⁶ had not an airman just then reported seeing their comrades still along the Hindenburg Outpost-Line. To risk laying the barrage on them, as General O'Ryan writes, would have been "repulsive to the mass of the officers and men of the division and destructive of morale."

The situation was represented accordingly to Monash to

²² The reader of this chapter should be warned not to confuse this with the 54th Brit. Bde., 18th Div., which would attack beside it.

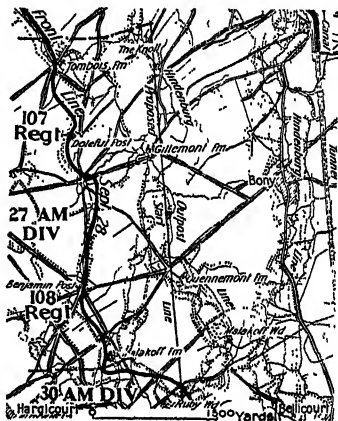
²³ To signal their position to the contact airmen the battalions had been provided with flares and with bright discs (carried beneath the flap of the men's gas-masks). The airmen saw no flares and few discs, and therefore located the line, as far as they could, by the sight of the troops. One pilot before dusk on the 27th reported Americans at Gillemont Farm and Malakoff Wood and men fighting at the Knoll; another said the Americans seemed to be back in the old front line. Next morning a III Corps air patrol by similar observation twice reported Americans in various parts of the objective, with some Germans in between. Patrols of the 3rd Aust. Sqn. indicated that the Americans were back in their old front line and Germans holding the objective in strength.

²⁴ Maj.-Gen. Stanley H. Ford, D.S.M. Chief of Staff, 27th Div. A.E.F., 1917-19. Asst. Chief of Staff, Washington, 1927-30; b. Columbus, U.S.A., 30 Jan. 1877.

²⁵ Br.-Gen. Palmer E. Pierce, D.S.M. Commanded 54th Bde. A.E.F. (Awarded Brit. C.B.)

²⁶ This is implied in the records of the 54th Brit. Bde.

whom the realisation of it came as a staggering blow. To let the Americans attack half a mile behind their barrage spelt disaster; but so, at this late hour, might any attempt to alter the plans. Monash went immediately to Rawlinson and asked if the offensive could be postponed for a day; the answer was, "No"—it was timed to fit in with attacks of other armies. Rawlinson decided that the plan must stand, but he would give the 27th Division additional tanks to help it to fight its way to the starting line before the barrage descended.²⁷ Meanwhile the division would try to gain ground by patrolling; Brig.-Genl. Pierce thought that his troops could get within 200 yards of the start-line by zero hour. Haig happened to call in while these arrangements were being made. Monash told him that he was "in a state of despair." Haig disapproved of this attitude, but it is doubtful if he himself understood the facts or their implication. He considered it "not a serious matter"; Monash "should attack to-morrow morning in force as arranged."



Haig went on to see "Read, a good honest fellow, but genuinely very anxious, and tried to cheer him."

Of the exhausted 106th Regiment, hurriedly reorganised behind the lines—9 officers and 252 men could yet be collected. These would try to carry out, as a battalion, the regiment's part, in supporting next day's offensive. The true events of the previous day's battle and the actual loss were still unknown.²⁸

The other forces for next day's battle were now in position: 30th and 27th American Divisions holding the front line; 5th and 3rd Australian Divisions between Ste. Emilie, Templeux-le-Guérard and Hesbécourt; 2nd Division at Bussy ready to come up behind them; columns of transport and tanks;

²⁷ One slight alteration was made in the barrage which now, except for the 15 minute halt beyond the tunnel, would advance throughout at the rate of 100 yards every four minutes.

²⁸ They are indicated later in this chapter.

masses of artillery, much of it transferred from III Corps, now carrying out the preparatory bombardment.²⁹ The first shoot—with mustard gas—had occupied the night before the 27th Division's preliminary effort.

The full scheme of co-operation by the American and Australian Corps was expounded by Monash on the 26th at a second, and much larger, conference attended by the heads and staffs of every formation taking part. After Monash had explained the movements, Major Hunn, Corps Intelligence Officer, described the intended distribution of air photographs and maps and the intelligence arrangements, and Brig.-Genl. Foott, Chief Engineer, expounded the scheme of roads. The conference was still sitting when at 1.30 p.m. Sir Douglas Haig called and, being begged by Monash to address the meeting, informed it that the biggest battle of the war had started that morning. Blows were being rained upon the enemy by all the chief Allies except the Italians.³⁰ Not only did each main stroke on the Western Front drive back the Germans, but on the Macedonian front on September 15th Serbians and French and on the 18th Greek and British began to thrust back the Bulgarians, who on the 30th signed an armistice.

²⁹ The field artillery comprised:

27th American Div.

Nine brigades under Br.-Gen. Burgess (C.R.A. 4th Div.).

4th Aust. Divl. Arty. (10th and 11th Bdes.).

25th Divl. Arty. (110th and 112th Bdes.).

58th Divl. Arty. (290th and 291st Bdes.).

86th, 104th and 108th Army Bdes., R.F.A.

30th American Div.

Eight brigades under Br.-Gen. Anderson (C.R.A. 1st Div.).

1st Aust. Divl. Arty. (1st and 2nd Bdes.).

2nd Divl. Arty. (4th and 5th Bdes.).

4th Army Bde., A.F.A.

65th, 84th and 150th Army Bdes., R.F.A.

The artillery to accompany the 3rd and 5th Divs. was as follows:

(Under Br.-Gen. Grimwade, 3rd Aust. Div.)—3rd Aust. Divl. Arty. (7th and 8th Bdes.).

3rd Army Bde., A.F.A.

(Under Br.-Gen. Bessell-Browne, 5th Aust. Div.)—5th Divl. Arty. (13th and 14th Bdes.).

6th Army Bde., A.F.A.

The artillery with the 3rd and 5th Divs. would take no part in the barrage except that the 3rd and 6th Bdes. would lay down smoke barrages on the flanks near the tunnel entrances; some British engineers would lay a special smoke screen guarding the American right flank, west of the canal.

The heavy artillery (under Corps control) comprised eleven brigades: 9th, 18th, 23rd, 41st, 51st, 68th, 71st, 73rd, 85th, 89th, and 93rd.

The whole artillery was under Br.-Gen. Coxen; the heavy artillery under Br.-Gen. Fraser (B.G.H.A.).

³⁰ The Italians did not attack till the war was ending but made up for this by continuing for at least a day after their armistice.

On the 19th Allenby's forces in Palestine broke through the Turks.

At 5.55 on September 29th, after three days³¹ of desultory bombardment, the Australian infantry brigades, then break-fasting at banks and quarries and bivouacs near the artillery positions, many of which had for two nights been shelled with German gas,³² heard the corps' barrage of seventeen field artillery brigades, supported by the Newton mortars and thirteen brigades of heavy artillery, crash out in unison with the bombardments by neighbouring corps on a front from near St. Quentin to Vendhuile. The southern half of Third Army had attacked at 5.30; its northern half with part of the First, and farther north the Allied forces in Flanders were continuing the assaults of the previous days. Immediately after the barrage the two American divisions advanced. Close behind them marched the Australian pioneers and American engineers to extend the roads. No other troops, except the signal service, were to pass Monash's "start-line" till 9 a.m., when the Americans should have reached their objective. Accordingly between 7 and 7.30 the 5th and 3rd Australian Divisions left their bivouacs, each battalion marching by its own route reconnoitred the night before. Their six brigades of field artillery moved along the four marked roads, and their tanks mostly went ahead making for the several arranged rendezvous. The staffs of corps and divisions waited for news; the Australian war correspondents and official photographers and the distinguished visitors came up behind by motor-cars, intending to reach the start-line with the Australian infantry and to watch from the Americans' objective the advance upon Beaurevoir.³³

The previous day had been thoroughly wet after two days of showers, and this day, Sunday, broke misty, especially in the valleys. Back to corps headquarters came cheerful messages—at 7.5 that the right (30th) division had crossed over

³¹ The ammunition trains had been one day late. In the bombardment with mustard gas from 10 p.m. on Sep. 26 to 6 a.m. on the 27th 32,437 shells were fired by the field artillery.

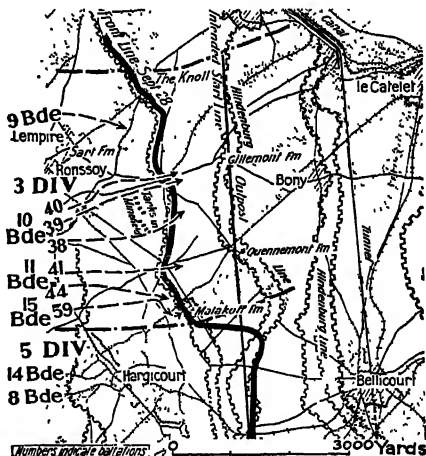
³² Some Australian battalions had little sleep on the 27th-28th.

³³ In the first phase sight would be too limited by smoke.

the tunnel on time, and, at 8.10, that a company of the 27th had passed the Knoll (Hindenburg Outpost-Line).³⁴ The Australian battalions in rear came up through much gassed ground near the guns and in the hollows, and many had to keep on their gas-masks till well past Ronssoy and Hargicourt. Here they ran into the mist which became dense in the valleys; even in parts of the high ground it limited the view to a hundred yards or so. The Australian brigades marched light-heartedly—the front line should then be three miles ahead.

Yet, on reaching the open level spur leading from Ronssoy towards the old American front line, the left flank battalions—40th followed by 39th, of the 10th Brigade—found German shells bursting thickly there, and their ears soon caught the rattle of machine-guns.

The signallers with their cable waggon going to establish a brigade report centre, had stopped ahead of them, as had the engineers and pioneers. Farther south in the valley between Ronssoy and Hargicourt the 38th and 37th Battalions and the left of the 11th Brigade,³⁵ climbing towards the old front at the valley's end, came into the same shelling; and a machine-gun barrage kicked up the earth around them. The next spur southwards was that up which the 74th Division had attacked on September 18th together with the left of the 1st Australian Division. On this the right flank battalions (44th and 42nd) of the 3rd Division, and the left (59th³⁶) of the 5th Division, after passing through gassed areas where the eastern



machine-gun barrage kicked up the earth around them. The next spur southwards was that up which the 74th Division had attacked on September 18th together with the left of the 1st Australian Division. On this the right flank battalions (44th and 42nd) of the 3rd Division, and the left (59th³⁶) of the 5th Division, after passing through gassed areas where the eastern

³⁴ Both messages apparently were American reports sent back by the attached artillery; the 4th Div.'s artillery reported its impression that all was going well but added that the German barrage was rather heavy.

³⁵ The 41st Bn. followed by the 43rd.

³⁶ This now included the old 60th, which formed 2 companies.

sun glinted dazzlingly on their goggles, came into fog and smoke so dense that it was most difficult to keep direction. The head of the 59th found the 44th marching just in front of it. The two battalions then agreed to veer gradually towards their proper fronts. The 44th vanished into the mist, and Col. Scanlan led the 59th sharply southwards to Malakoff Farm where shells burst and bullets from close machine-guns swept among the troops as if aimed at them. In a thinning of the mist many of the leading company were hit. Here, behind the old American front and near the headquarters of the right battalion (II/108th) of the 27th American Division, Capt. Hornby³⁷ of the leading company was killed, Lieut. Tucker³⁸ mortally wounded.³⁹ Many Americans lay dead or wounded among the yellow half trampled wheat. Small parties, clearly Americans, were seen ahead. Scanlan temporarily halted the 59th, and, while his adjutant⁴⁰ went on to interrogate the Americans, Scanlan walked back for a tank to suppress the machine-guns. Like all Australians who had run into this fire, he guessed that it came from posts overlooked by the advancing Americans.

Most of the 3rd Division very soon found this fire too dangerous to be ignored. On the ridge east of Ronssoy, where the fog created by the flank smoke screen, carried by a change of the wind, came over in billows, Americans could be seen retiring in small parties. Half a mile *behind* the old American line south of this ridge lay a line of tanks—by 11 a.m., eight of them—along a belt of old British wire. The Australians reaching them found every one disabled, most, if not all, by a line of 60-lb. "plum-pudding" bombs evidently laid there when these defences were British.⁴¹ After passing this, men began to be hit by machine-gun bullets. It was 9 a.m.; the 10th Brigade should then be meeting its tanks and artillery at Gillemont Farm. Clearly something was wrong, but Cols. Lord (40th) and Henderson (39th) and the leaders of the 38th south of them decided to push on over the old American front line. The leading com-

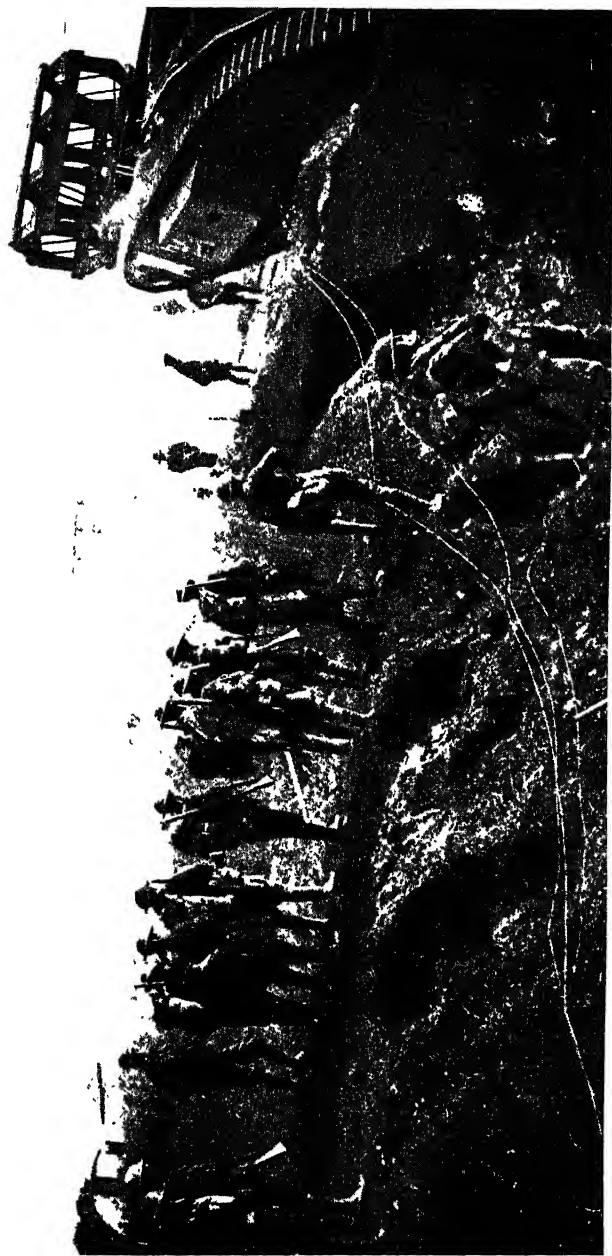
³⁷ Capt. L. L. Hornby, 59th Bn. Engineer; of Mitcham, Vic.; b. Hawthorn, Vic., 1 June 1892. Killed in action, 29 Sep. 1918.

³⁸ Lt. A. J. Tucker, 59th Bn. Hotel assistant; of Kyabram, Vic.; b. Moama, N.S.W., 23 Sep. 1894. Died of wounds, 29 Sep. 1918.

³⁹ Lts. G. B. Bower (S. Melbourne), W. W. Leggatt (Sunbury, Vic.), L. H. Parker (St. Kilda, Vic.) and R. W. Marshall (Ballan, Vic.) also were wounded.

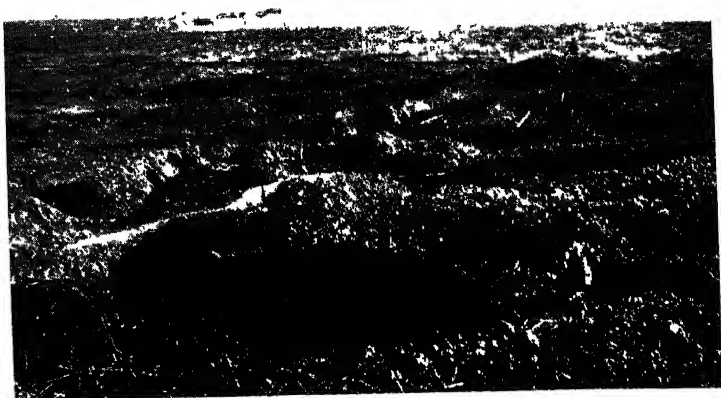
⁴⁰ Lt. E. A. O. Baker (Albert Park, Vic.).

⁴¹ For a picture of some *see Vol. XII, plates 558-9*. The Germans had fenced the area and marked it: "Achtung minenfeld" (Beware Minefield!).



52. TROOPS OF THE 11TH BRIGADE AND TANKS MOVING INTO THE BATTLE NEAR BELLICOURT,
29TH SEPTEMBER, 1918

*British Official Photograph.
Aust. War Memorial Collection No K114*



53. BONY SEEN FROM THE KNOLL

The Knoll, a mile north-west of Bony, was seized by the 107th and 105th U.S. Infantry on the left flank, 29th September, 1918.

*Aust War Memorial Official Photo. No. E3743.
Taken on 5th October, 1918.*



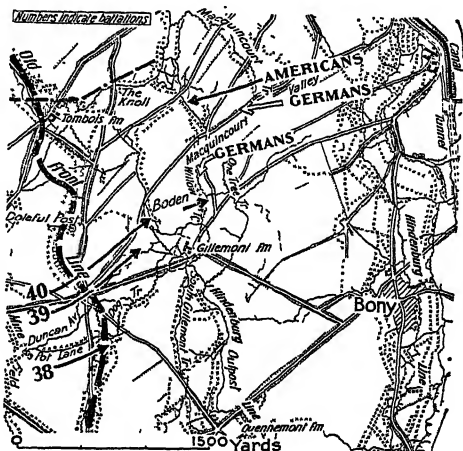
54. TANKS DESTROYED IN THE OLD MINFIELD, 29TH SEPTEMBER, 1918

One of the old 60lb. bombs used for mines can be seen beside the right-hand tank. The tank on the horizon was near Quennemont Farm.

*Aust. War Memorial Official Photo No. E4929.
Taken on 31d October, 1918.*

To face p. 961.

pany of the 38th was dribbled by its splendid leader, Capt. Fairweather, into Dog Trench, under intense fire from Gillemont Farm close ahead. The 39th and 40th crossed the summit and advanced some 500 yards along the southern slope of Macquincourt valley. Small parties of retiring Americans met by the 40th said they did not know what had happened except that they had failed: they had lost their way in the smoke, were without officers, and did not know what to do, and were anxious to find anyone who could tell them. South of Gillemont everything was clothed in fog,



but north of it many Americans were seen retiring up Macquincourt valley, Germans following. German anti-tank guns blazed at the retiring Americans from down the valley, as did other field-guns behind Gillemont Farm on the ridge. These and machine-guns caused tragic loss as the untried troops scrambled out of this or that trench to shoot and then make the run back up the valley, heading towards Willow Trench⁴² in the hollow or up the bare knoll north of it.

The Australian brigades had strict orders not to become entangled in the Americans' task but to keep themselves strictly for their own; but the situation on this flank looked so dangerous that Col. Lord (40th) ordered Capt. Ruddock's company and part of Capt. Findlay's⁴³ to Willow Trench and towards the Knoll to stop the Germans. Lieut. Boden,⁴⁴ going first, found Willow Trench crowded with Americans, unhurt, wounded, and

⁴² The front line of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line.

⁴³ Col. W. K. Findlay, M.C., V.D.; 40th Bn. Bank manager; of Scottsdale, Tas.; b. West Devonport, Tas., 18 Dec. 1881. Died 24 Apr. 1941.

⁴⁴ Lt. H. Boden, M.C., 40th Bn. Labourer; of Myrtle Bank, Tas.; b. Myrtle Bank, 1889. Died of wounds, 29 Sep. 1918.

Outpost-Line between it and Gillemont Farm farther north, and had lost heavily and been broken up. The 41st asked its brigade for instructions and meanwhile waited. The right battalion, 44th, ran into heavy shelling near Quennemont Farm, south of which it was to pass, and then was suddenly swept by the fire of a machine-gun at the farm. Capt. Fowler of its left leading company was wounded and Lieut. McDermott⁵² killed. The bodies of many Americans lay around. The wire sparkled where bullets hit. The company sank into shell-holes. Meanwhile, in the mist half a mile in rear, Col. Scanlan of the 59th came back to his battalion in the tank that he had gone to fetch, and directed the machine towards the sound of machine-guns on his left front. It toured round the area, and then was taken by the 10th Brigade for another task. About the same time a tank officer⁵³ sent two of the 11th Brigade's surviving tanks to subdue the machine-guns at Quennemont Farm. They reached the ridge but were put out of action there.⁵⁴ However, Lieut. O'Brien,⁵⁵ 9th M.G. Company, attached to the 11th Brigade, had rushed two machine-guns to the crest north of the farm, and with the help of a tank he bombed the Germans from the five-ways there. Lieut. Buckingham's⁵⁶ company of the 59th, also, had pressed on in the fog towards the farm, capturing 40 frightened Germans who came out offering cigars; part of the company⁵⁷ took Quennemont Farm and began mopping up the trenches. A machine-gun close beyond still fired persistently; but, as the heavy fire now eased, not only the left company of the 44th but the 59th, still in rear unseen in the mist, moved on.⁵⁸

⁵² Lt. A. G. McDermott, 44th Bn. Grocer; of Guildford, W.A.; b. Liverpool, England, 1886. Killed in action, 29 Sep. 1918.

⁵³ Maj. Hotblack, G.S.O. (2), Tank Corps. (Maj.-Gen. F. E. Hotblack, D.S.O., M.C., p.s.c.; Royal Tank Corps. Military Attaché, Berlin, 1935-37. Gen. Staff, B.E.F., Sep. 1939. Commanded a division, 1939-40. Of Norfolk, Eng.; b. Norwich, Norfolk, 12 Mar. 1887.)

⁵⁴ Later Lt. E. E. Paterson, signalling officer of the 42nd Bn. (in support), reconnoitring for a visual station, was asked by a tank officer to hold off the Germans while the wounded were rescued from the tanks. Paterson and his signallers threw German bombs but through some accident Paterson was badly wounded by a bomb thrown by an American.

⁵⁵ Lt. J. L. O'Brien, 9th M.G. Coy. Warehouseman; of N. Sydney; b. Bathurst, N.S.W., 5 Apr. 1897.

⁵⁶ Lt. H. E. Buckingham, 59th Bn. Clerk; of Horsham, Vic.; b. Armidale, N.S.W., 15 Nov. 1894.

⁵⁷ Under Lt. E. J. Greive (South Yarra, Vic.) and C.S.M. E. A. Richardson (St. Kilda, Vic.).

⁵⁸ At one stage a man ran up to the crest on the left and, standing up, fired shot after shot into a machine-gun post.

The right flank companies of the 44th (under Capt. Lewis and Lieut. Hunt⁵⁹), still heading south of their proper course, had found the Hindenburg Outpost-Line south of Malakoff Wood empty. Evidently the American attack had gone through in this sector. Despite shelling and machine-gun fire from the north-east, Hunt and Lewis and their companies pushed on 400 yards to the Hindenburg Line and thence 400 yards to its rear trench and another 400 to the Tunnel mound. The mist had then cleared, some

force of Americans was evidently still ahead, but field-guns near Cabaret Wood Farm on a hill straight in front shelled the companies point blank as they approached, caus-

ing heavy loss. Along the mound 50 Americans were sheltering. Recognising by a line of telegraph posts that they themselves were too far south, Hunt and Lewis turned north along the Bellicourt-le Catelet road, but machine-gun and trench-mortar fire on it forced them to shelter in a communication trench (which may here be called "Tunnel Sap") running from the Hindenburg Line to beyond the Tunnel mound. The companies and the Americans manned this facing north. Hunt was wounded in the shelling.

When the fire from Quennemont Farm ceased, the northern companies of the 44th, also, came on to the Hindenburg Line, part of them being fed by Capt. Longmore through a more northerly communication trench, Top Lane, to avoid the shelling from Cabaret Wood Farm. Behind and between these two companies and still in the fog, Col. Scanlan was leading the 59th through the wire of the Hindenburg Line when startled by a shout from his adjutant. Thirty yards ahead a German had risen and was aiming his rifle at them. They



⁵⁹ Maj. W. J. Hunt, M.B.E.; 44th Bn. Farmer; of Cottesloe, W.A.; b Streatham, Eng., 8 June 1891.

dropped in the wire. Some Lewis-gunners kept down the Germans and Capt. Roberts'⁶⁰ company presently captured the post.⁶¹ Scanlan sent Capt. Dickson's⁶² and Lieut. Parr's⁶³ companies to occupy the second trench of the Hindenburg Line. Dickson's, moving through a sap, cleared a German post in the support line, and found there the northern companies of the 44th. Through the clearing mist, the le Catelet line, half a mile beyond the Tunnel mound, became visible. It was held by Germans, apparently 100 strong.

Clearly the Americans had got no farther there. While the 44th and 59th were pushing through the Hindenburg lines machine-gun fire from their left had been continuous. Now at the Tunnel mound it came also from the left rear; and, as the mist cleared, anti-tank guns and batteries in the valleys behind the Hindenburg Line fired over open sights. Machine-gun bullets from the north also were striking the bottom and rear wall of the Hindenburg trench, hitting men who sat low in it. From Tunnel Sap indeed Sergeant Ingvarson of the 44th saw a machine-gun firing from the Hindenburg Line behind him against Australians and Americans approaching from the west. Calling for a Lewis gun to follow, he scrambled out with his men after him, and running 100 yards across the open in rear of the Germans, shot and bombed them and captured 150 yards of that trench and eight machine-guns.

Col. Scanlan now realised⁶⁴ what he had suspected before, that the attack north of him must have failed. With the mist gone, the 44th, 59th, and Americans, looking northwards down Vauban Valley, saw half a mile away string after string of men crossing westwards to Bony ridge. At first it had been thought they might be American wounded returning from the first objective, but they were soon recognised as Germans carrying bombs and ammunition, and intense fire from the Australians and Americans stopped the traffic. Presently a trench-

⁶⁰ Capt. C. H. Roberts, 60th and 59th Bns. Electrician; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Richmond, Vic., 10 Dec. 1892. Killed in action, 29 Sep. 1918.

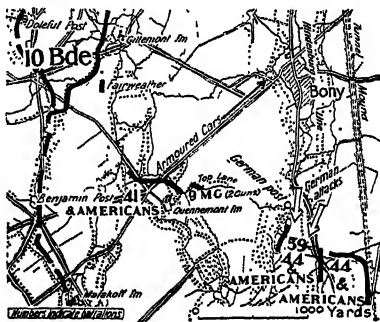
⁶¹ It was at one of several German lamp-signal stations, each on high ground.

⁶² Maj. R. J. Dickson, 59th Bn. Business manager; of Warrnambool, Vic.; b. Warrnambool, 18 July 1889.

⁶³ Capt. S. W. Neale (E. Kew, Vic.) had been mortally wounded by a shell.

⁶⁴ As did Col. Clark (44th) who presently joined him.

mortar opened from the north, and Germans in both trenches of the Hindenburg Line attacked with bombs, rushing the barricade in the second trench and gaining fifty yards before Parr's company beat them back. Capt. Roberts of the support company was killed. Help was sent back to the first trench, where Lieut. Chambers had only a platoon. Using German bombs, the Australians retook the lost ground and rebuilt the barricade farther north. Eventually Scanlan, Longmore, Capt. Loughnan (58th) and others, with companies or platoons of the 44th, 59th, and 41st and numbers of the 108th American Infantry, established positions facing both north and east from the Hindenburg Outpost-Line



to the Tunnel. Two machine-guns of the 9th Company, being hurried forward to Scanlan by Lieut. Slater,⁶⁵ were placed in Top Lane,⁶⁶ but at the eastern end of this lane the Germans held an anti-tank fort with machine-guns and a field-gun.

It was at this hour, 11 a.m., that the armoured cars for raiding le Cateau and Busigny, and their supporting whippets, came up to the junction of five roads near Quennemont Farm, and passing over the crest sped down Dirk Valley towards the hamlet of Bony on the next ridge, in the Hindenburg Line. The cars shot some Germans who had withdrawn from Quennemont Farm, but ran into intense machine-gun fire, and anti-tank guns in Bony destroyed three as they approached.

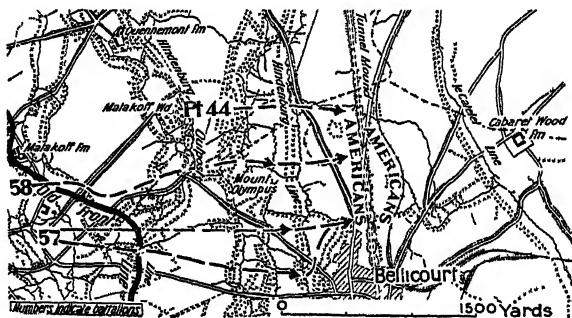
⁶⁵ Lt. F. G. Slater, M.C.; 9th M.G. Coy. Warehouse salesman; of Stanmore, N.S.W.; b. Dulwich Hill, N.S.W., 22 June 1893.

⁶⁶ The 9th M.G. Coy., attached to the 11th Bde., had been bringing up its guns on limbers. One limber ran into shelling at Malakoff Farm where some of the mules were hit. Another limber was on the summit near Quennemont Farm when the smoke cleared, and three mules were killed by fire from the farm. Lt. W. C. Kerr (Randwick, N.S.W.) had been wounded trying to release them. Lt. Slater had the mules of another section unharnessed and two guns packed on them by Sgt. J. Adlam (Cairns, O'land). Slater and Adlam then took forward these guns and reported to Scanlan. In Triangle Trench these machine-gunners found a few Americans who had been there since Sep. 27.

The rest were hurriedly withdrawn, German guns destroying another car and four whippets as they went.⁶⁷

The leading battalions of the 3rd Division and one battalion of the 5th were thus, by or before 10.30, brought to a stop. While they tried to discover what was happening ahead, the reserve brigade, 9th, coming up past the north of Ronssoy was similarly stopped; in rear the accompanying artillery and the distinguished visitors each came up against the troops in front like trucks in a railway smash. The 3rd Division's unmounted troops sank out of sight in shell-holes.

The 5th Division's foremost brigades, 8th and 15th, had run into denser fog. The 57th Battalion (15th Brigade), which should have been next to the 59th, marched in two parallel columns, and after passing quickly (by way of a trench) through heavy shelling on Cologne heights, saw billowing from the canal valley the mist thickened by the southern smoke screen. For-



tunately the intelligence officer, Lieut. Staley,⁶⁸ had noticed on the previous day a line of telegraph poles leading towards the battalion's objective,⁶⁹ and the column led by him and Lieut.-Col. Denehy reached these as it entered the fog. It was impossible to see more than a few yards, but the troops closed up in file, each able to tap the back of the man ahead. Staley and Denehy then led them on from one broken pole to another by stooping down to keep sight of the telegraph wires which lay

⁶⁷ The crew of one car helped to clear dugouts near Quennemont Farm. Three whippets offered to clear the farm but this had then been done.

⁶⁸ Lt. A. G. Staley, 57th Bn. Commercial traveller; of Fitzroy, Vic.; b. Wilby, Vic., 25 Apr. 1890.

⁶⁹ Col. Denehy decided to follow them as the "Red" road would be shelled.

twisted on the ground. A passing lift of the fog enabled them to check their position. Soon, on passing some old barbed wire with trenches behind it, they guessed they were in the main Hindenburg Line. Denehy halted his men while he searched for a road that should be north of him. As he found it the fog cleared, and shells soon burst thickly around. His column was hurrying to the second trench when the other half of the battalion appeared to the left rear, coming down Mount Olympus, and near it the support battalion, the 58th.⁷⁰ Ten Americans came along the support line as the 57th reached it, and said, quite accurately, that they were part of a mopping-up battalion clearing the "second trench."

The 58th, after meeting fire near Malakoff Farm, had worked through trenches in dense fog and shell-fire to Mount Olympus.⁷¹ Americans escorting back small parties of prisoners knew nothing of the situation, but the 57th and 58th (the latter now on the left) recognised that something must have miscarried. After skirting the north of Bellicourt the 57th descried on the Tunnel mound a number of figures, of which one was clearly waving them back. They went on, however, and reaching the mound at 10.50 found several hundred Americans along the bank and in dugouts. These men could say only that something was wrong ahead. Looking thither the Australians saw a few more Americans in the ditch of a light railway, 300 yards out. Just then bullets swept viciously from the north along the *rear* side of the mound. Nothing had been heard of the 59th Battalion, which should have been there, but at 11.20 the 58th came up, itself finding men of the 44th on its left. There also Americans said that others were ahead, but they did not know where. Patrols of the 57th sent to the railway ditch reported that Germans were firing from the le Catelet line, 500 yards beyond. To the right rear some of the 5th Pioneer Battalion and 105th U.S. Engineer Regiment, whose task was to make the "Black" and "Red" roads, shot an anti-tank gun crew and seized a machine-gun and a number of prisoners. Col. Denehy⁷² (57th) decided that the 15th Brigade's attack in the second phase must start from the

⁷⁰ The 15th Bde. now had only three battalions.

⁷¹ A light horse trooper, J. F. Mulcahy (Katamabite, Vic.), kept touch excellently with the 57th.

⁷² Capt. Loughnan (58th) came to him along the mound.

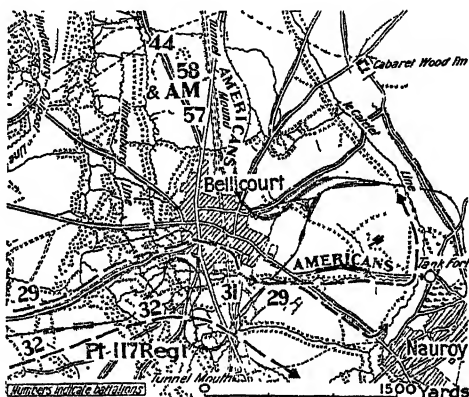
mound instead of from the American objective beyond the le Catelet line.

The southernmost Australian brigade, the 8th, when descending towards Bellicourt at 8.45, ran into fog so dense that the task of leadership, says an account from the left front battalion (29th), became "very anxious indeed." The smoke screen on the southern flank was just ending and apparently was blown back like the northern one. American wounded on the road gave the cheering news that the Hindenburg Line and Bellicourt were taken. But about Quarry Wood parties retiring with rifles slung said they had lost touch in the fog, had no orders, and did not know what to do. The Australians had to move in very close order—the smoke is described as "impenetrable." The "Black" road was crowded with tanks, engineers, guns, and waggons slowly advancing. "Can't see five yards," reported Col. Freeman of the support battalion (31st) at 10.8 when entering Bellicourt with the rear of the 29th. Americans asked the commander of the 29th, Capt. Derham,⁷³ to capture some machine-guns that had been overlooked. He would not divert his men in the mist, but when one or two machine-guns fired from the edge of the village he extended two companies; and these, and a couple of tanks, and part of the 5th Pioneers and 105th U.S. Engineer Regiment, quickly cleared the German groups.⁷⁴ The village streets were dense with traffic and with American machine-gunners lost in the fog. Reports conflicted but Derham's patrols informed him that Americans held trenches beyond the village. To the north the sound of artillery and rifle-fire was "terrific." German artillery was shelling Bellicourt, and Derham, with Lieut.-Cols. Freeman (31st Bn.) and Caddy (13th A.F.A. Bde.), realised that disaster might happen there if the mist rose. After advising Caddy to withdraw his advanced guns west of the Tunnel line, Derham and Freeman took their battalions to the trenches east of the town to wait till patrols could discover the situation. In the village the 29th Battalion had met its four tanks.

⁷³ Capt. C. A. M. Derham, M.C.; 29th Bn. Inspector in biscuit factory; of Kew, Vic.; b. S. Melbourne, 13 Nov. 1887.

⁷⁴ 5th Pioneers lost 3 officers and 61 others this day, and the 105th Regt. 2 officers and 46 others. The 2nd Aust. Tunnelling Coy., which went with them, had 9 men hit.

The mist now thinned and twenty Americans, extended in line, came running in from the front. They said there were no Americans ahead of them but "any amount of Germans"; and the 29th's patrol⁷⁵ reported that Nauroy, topping the next height, was in enemy hands. Now, about 11 a.m., Derham heard that the 32nd Battalion, which should be on his right, was on that flank—though apparently some distance away. No troops had been found on his left, but he decided to seize the le Catelet trench and Nauroy, from which the mist just then lifted its veil. The clearing air also disclosed the 29th Battalion's four tanks coming out of Bellicourt in search of instructions, and two guns of the 49th Battery⁷⁶ which had passed unawares through the infantry in the fog. Guns, trench-mortars and machine-guns in a German tank-fort on the edge of Nauroy wood quickly destroyed three tanks and burst shells about the two Australian guns. These got away though some men and horses were hit. The German artillery now put shell after shell into the column of batteries west of Bellicourt, forcing it to turn hurriedly and eventually take position behind the Hindenburg Outpost-Line.⁷⁷ Farther back part of the reserve infantry brigade, 14th, was caught in column of route by the Nauroy batteries and forced to scatter.⁷⁸



⁷⁵ Under Lt. H. T. Williams (Eaglehawk, Vic.). It unearthed a few Germans.

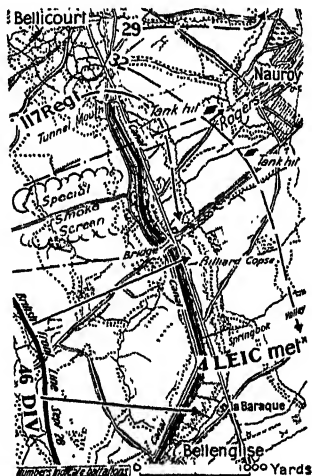
⁷⁶ Under Lt. W. Sinclair (Petersham, N.S.W.), allotted to the 32nd Bn.

⁷⁷ The advanced section of the 49th Bty. had two waggons blown up, but the guns, withdrawn west of Bellicourt, silenced the now located tank fort. Two guns of the 55th Bty. (attached to the 59th Bn.) had teams and men hit in Bellicourt, and were temporarily left there. The 29th Bn.'s remaining tank got back to Bellicourt. The tank officer, Capt. I. C. A. Glanville, himself wounded, organised a picked team from the four crews, and held the tank ready to do whatever Derham wished.

⁷⁸ Lt. F. O. Twomey (Penshurst, Vic.), 54th Bn., was killed.

At 11.50 Derham ordered the 29th forward. Working up the two sunken roads and an eastward-leading communication trench, it passed the American line—several officers and 250 men in the northern road—bombed a German post from the entrance to the le Catelet line, fought its way northwards along that trench capturing the anti-tank fort west of the wood,⁷⁹ and eventually was stopped by a German post at the railway crossing and by fire from Cabaret Wood Farm 1,000 yards to the north. Finding no one on its left the 29th did not go on to Nauroy.

But unknown to it other troops did. The 32nd Battalion, leading the right of the Australian advance, had been forced to fight its way through the mist south of Bellicourt. When it was first opposed Maj. Wark, a young and vigorous officer acting in command, secured the help of a tank that he heard passing in the fog, and with it captured two machine-guns. He then found west of the Tunnel 200 leaderless men of the 117th American Regiment, which should have passed east of the Tunnel and swung south. He attached them to his force and, again hearing engines in the fog, found the British tanks allotted to the 117th and, getting them to precede him, advanced at 10 a.m. between Bellicourt and the Tunnel mouth clearing a number of "unmopped" machine posts. South of Bellicourt about 10.30 he found his tanks⁸⁰—only two surviving—and realising that the Americans had not reached their objectives decided to attempt their task as well as his own. Accordingly, with two tanks ahead, two companies in line, and two companies following in succession, he headed south of Nauroy village.⁸¹



⁷⁹ Here were 2 field-guns, 2 trench-mortars, anti-tank rifles, machine-guns, and 13 Germans, very frightened, in an elaborate dugout. Many Germans lay dead along the trench.

⁸⁰ Of "B" Coy., 8th Tank Bn. (Capt. J. E. Reilly).

⁸¹ His Americans presently joined their regiment near the canal. For his leadership this day Wark received the Victoria Cross.

In the growing light the Nauroy guns hit one tank. Wark sent the other with his two rear companies led by Capt. Rogers⁸² into the southern end of the village. The tank was quickly hit and Rogers was shot, but his company swept through the southern end of the village taking 40 prisoners, and then followed the battalion south-eastwards.

The country ahead of the 32nd now seemed empty except for isolated machine-gun posts and a few field-guns. Wark had seen no other troops of his own side except a company of the brigade reserve (30th Battalion) near Bellicourt. He sent a message saying that his left was in the air; but while the going was good, he pushed on.

Receiving this message about noon the 30th, which actually was close to the 29th but had seen only some Americans ahead, sent to Nauroy two patrols under Lieuts. Yeomans⁸³ and Forbes.⁸⁴ On the way Yeomans found two tanks,⁸⁵ whose commander allowed him to go in one of them into Nauroy and discover where the Germans were. On his return the three officers arranged to attack, and about 12.45 both tanks and the patrols entered the village and cleared it⁸⁶ and part of the le Catelet line west of it. On reaching the wood at the northern end the tanks were endangered by the anti-tank gun there; but a Lewis-gunner, Pte. Knight,⁸⁷ crept to a point from which he shot the crew. The patrols established two posts east of the village.

Meanwhile Maj. Wark and the 32nd pushed on south-east. A few scattered German machine-guns and one or two field-guns were operated until the 32nd was 300-400 yards away, when the crews stopped shooting and surrendered. The 32nd left these guns and went on until, on climbing the second ridge past Nauroy, they found infantry in khaki coming up out of a dip. These were the 4th Leicester, 46th British Division: its 137th Brigade had succeeded in the extraordinarily difficult task of crossing the

⁸² Capt. A. T. Rogers, M.C., 32nd Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Coolgardie, W.A.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 3 June 1889. Killed in action, 29 Sep. 1918.

⁸³ Lt. J. C. Yeomans, D.S.O., 30th Bn. Sugar refinery manager; of Woollahra, N.S.W.; b. Surry Hills, N.S.W., 28 Apr. 1883.

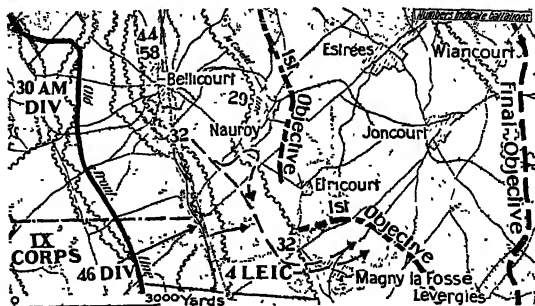
⁸⁴ Lt. A. H. McL. Forbes, M.M., 30th Bn. Clerk; of Wallsend, N.S.W.; b. Muswellbrook, N.S.W., 1 Sep. 1894.

⁸⁵ Apparently some of the 117th's—"B" Coy., 1st Tank Bn.

⁸⁶ Yeomans himself rushed a post and captured one machine-gun.

⁸⁷ Pte. A. E. Knight, M.M. (No. 2166A; 30th Bn.). Woolcarter; of Bendigo, Vic.; b. Bendigo, 28 Feb. 1895.

canal, seizing bridges before the Germans could blow them up,⁸⁸ and capturing in time with the barrage the water-side posts, the Hindenburg Line above them, and the crest of the knuckles beyond—a wonderful achievement. The 138th and 139th Brigades had then passed through to capture the le Catelet line, Magny-la-Fosse and Lehaucourt. It was in this stage that the 4th Leicester were advancing. The 32nd Division would next move through and seize the final objective of its corps, from Levergies to beyond le Tronquoy.



The meeting gave immense relief to Wark. He now knew that this part of the plan was working out. He reported at 12.20 that he was waiting for the barrage to lift in order to advance to his final objective. With the 4th Leicester on his right (who, he said afterwards, were "very good all through") and some tanks, he went on through Magny-la-Fosse, from which came only weak machine-gun fire,⁸⁹ and then on with a battalion of the 32nd Division. Wark realised that no friendly troops were on his left, but he sent an officer to find the 31st Battalion, and then headed north-east towards Joncourt. Only weak, distant machine-gun fire reached the battalion, which by all appearances, could have advanced for miles. Up the slopes and into the gullies in its rear were now moving British tanks, artillery, transport, and field kitchens. Once or twice

⁸⁸ Including the solid, high level Riqueval Bridge (at the Roman road) which was rushed by Capt. A. H. Charlton, 6th N. Staffordshire, who captured a machine-gun post and cut the wires while an N.C.O. shot the Germans trying to explode the mines. On the right, water in the canal had been found very shallow, but on the left deep. Here it was crossed by swimming helped by lines or planks. The enemy was surprised.

⁸⁹ The adjutant, Lt. F. Hardy (Alberton, S.A.), and the liaison officer from the 31st Bn., Lt. Morpeth, going out alone here captured 30 Germans and 2 field-guns. Lts. P. F. Lucas (Bowral, N.S.W.) and H. T. Crain (Subiaco, W.A.) fired 30 rounds from a captured field-gun at a German anti-tank gun near the Sugar Factory and silenced it, but their gun was then hit by a German field-gun.

German field-guns on the heights about Nauroy forced these to move into shelter, but the scene exhilarated all Australians and Americans who saw it. The advanced infantry, however, was now very tired; and about 3 o'clock, on the spurs projecting south-west from Joncourt, Wark stopped. He sent patrols towards Joncourt and the Sugar Factory east of Nauroy, and extended two companies back for a mile towards Etricourt, guarding the left. He then held a sharp salient.

A message from him reached the 31st near Bellicourt at noon. Guessing that the 117th American Infantry⁹⁰ had been lost in the fog, Colonel Freeman telephoned to brigade headquarters and then pushed on to Etricourt. The 31st had to go round near the canal to avoid heavy shelling and at first missed the 32nd's flank. Wark's patrols found Joncourt and the Sugar Factory held by the enemy. But the 32nd Division farther south was almost on its final objective.

Thus whereas most of the 3rd Division before reaching Monash's "start-line" had run into strong resistance, the 5th

**Situation at
10.30-11a.m.**

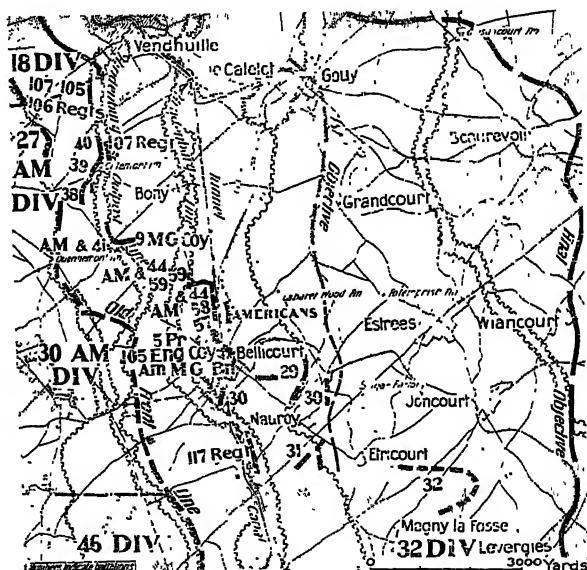
Division south of Quennemont Farm had advanced, generally speaking, a mile farther, most of the Germans having been already cleared by the Americans from the Hindenburg Outpost and Main lines and Tunnel mound in that sector, and from Bellicourt. The 5th Division had forced its way into part of the le Catelet Line and into Nauroy, and, on the extreme right, to the edge of Joncourt. Here it had passed the American objective and could have reached the final one had troops farther north been able to support it. On its right the IX Corps was in line with it, and on the extreme right had reached the final objective at le Tronquoy.

The stoppage in the north had been early and accurately reported to General Gellibrand (3rd Divn.) by the party with the 10th Brigade's cable waggon. Lieuts. Philip and Sims⁹¹ at 9.50 telephoned that the 10th and 11th Brigades had been held up. The Americans were thought to have gone on "and not mopped up the country behind them." By 10.3 Lieut.-Col.

⁹⁰ One of its battalion commanders had just come in, looking for his troops.

⁹¹ Lt. J. F. Sims, D.C.M., M.M.; 3rd Div. Sig. Coy. Telegraph linesman; of Sydney; b. Redfern, N.S.W., 13 Apr. 1887.

Jess (G.S.O.1) had also heard from Brig.-Genl. Cannan (11th Bde.) that the American advance had apparently gone well in the south, and that IX Corps troops were across the canal. At 10.35, when the 3rd Division's brigades reported their line and asked what to do, Gellibrand was already on his way to his brigadiers; Jess advised them to see whether by vigorous patrolling they could get through or round the resisting German posts, but not to attack in strength. The battalions were already doing what he advised. About 11 a.m. there reached



Monash an airman's report that Americans had been seen all along their objective. Ground flares had been observed (it said) in Gouy. Messages from General Brand, and from other senior Australians with the American staff, said that the 27th Division had undoubtedly reached the Tunnel mound, but that how much farther they had gone was unknown. If the air report was true⁹² the 27th Division, despite repeated warnings,

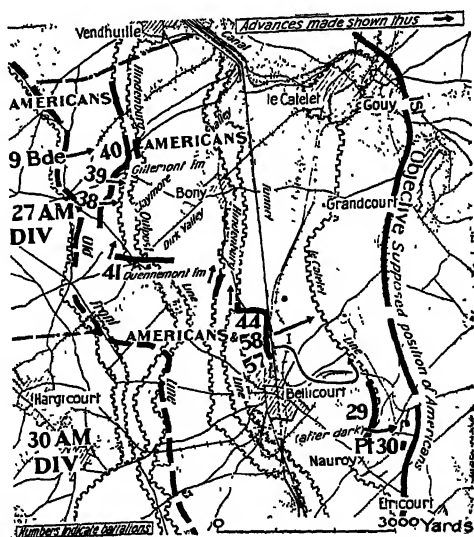
⁹² Reports conflicted. A message from the 8th Sqn. R.A.F. said that at 9.50 a.m. the line ran east of Bony and through Gouy. Ten tanks had been seen north of Bony and near le Catelet. On the other hand a patrol (apparently of the 3rd Aust. Sqn.) said that at 9.50-10.40 the area west of the American objective was totally obscured by mist; east of that it was clearer.

which Monash had begged the leaders to impress upon their troops, had made the same mistake that it was believed to have committed on September 27th—dashed on to its objective without thoroughly mopping up the trenches left behind. Monash, Blamey and many others now believed that the men had disobeyed their leaders in this matter, being probably, in honourable rivalry, determined not to let the Australians get ahead of them. If this was so, the Germans facing the 3rd Division and most of the 5th were only “pockets” left behind by the Americans whose line (it was believed) lay beyond. The Australian divisions therefore were ordered to push through the “machine-gun posts” and link up with the Americans.

Most of the front line Diggers and their officers now felt sure that, even if some Americans might still be ahead, they themselves were up against the main German force. In that case an obvious mea-

sure was to attack northwards from the 5th Division's advanced flank, threatening the flank and rear of the Germans facing the 3rd Division. At 11.50 Lieut.-Col. Jess warned the 3rd Division's reserve brigade, the 9th, originally intended to guard the northern flank, that it and its tanks would probably be required on the southern flank of the division, to make this attack.⁹³

On learning, however, that Corps Headquarters believed that the posts stopping the Australians were only a few that the Americans had missed, General McNicoll,



⁹³ This was indicated by Jess at 11.50.

whose own headquarters had been held up within sight of Gillemont Farm, told Col. Jess that the battalions reported the Germans to be very thick down Claymore Valley, with crowds of machine-guns. Anti-tank guns were active in Macquincourt Valley, and field-guns north-east of Gillemont Farm. Opposite the 40th and 39th Germans were massing and Americans retiring. All the tanks of the 10th and 11th Brigades had been put out of action. All this seemed more than the work of "unmopped elements," and without artillery the attempt to rush through would be very costly. Shortly afterwards General Gellibrand returning from his brigades, told Brig.-Genl. Blamey at Corps Headquarters that in his opinion the 27th American Division had yet not captured the official "start-line." Blamey insisted that the air report in question must be credited, being confirmed from two different sources. Gellibrand replied that the tank officers, whose machines together with armoured cars lay burnt or beaten back, were of his opinion. However, Corps Headquarters insisted, and accordingly all along the held-up line attempts were made, mostly at 3 p.m., to push through to the supposed line of Americans on the first objective with a view to then launching the second phase. Since many Americans were undoubtedly close ahead, the 3rd Division could not use even its three attached brigades of artillery,⁹⁴ much less the great mass of guns farther back.

In the 10th Brigade's effort some tanks helped but were quickly hit. When Capt. Peter's company of the 38th tried to advance from Dog Trench to south Gillemont Trench it was met by fire of field-guns, machine-guns and trench-mortars, the left platoon being cut to pieces and the company stopped as Fair-weather's had been.⁹⁵ The same happened to the 39th except for the left company, Capt. Wolstenholme's,⁹⁶ which was able to work up a communication sap into part of South Gillemont Trench.⁹⁷ An appeal to the attached artillery to fire a smoke

⁹⁴ These were ready, the 7th south-east of Ronssoy, and the 3rd and 8th south and west of Ronssoy.

⁹⁵ In Capt. R. C. Anderson's company only 10 men were left. The battalion was now commanded by Capt. C. L. Giles.

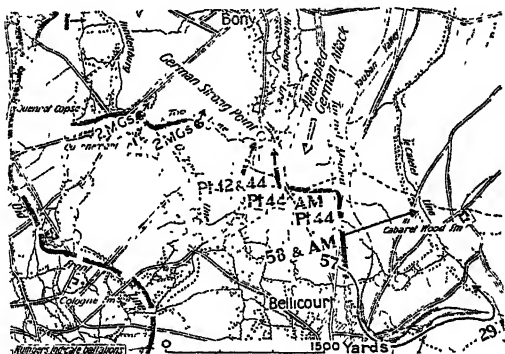
⁹⁶ Capt. R. Wolstenholme, 39th Bn. Clerk and ledgerkeeper; of W. Maitland, N.S.W.; b. W. Maitland, 28 Apr. 1894.

⁹⁷ A patrol had already been there. Now some Stokes mortars under Lt. W. Brydie (Brunswick, Vic.) firing 10 shots—all they had—somewhat quietened the machine-guns and field-guns in the farm ruins and sunken road south of it.

screen into Claymore Valley was answered at 5.55 p.m., and under cover of this the 38th also entered South Gillemont Trench, finding it partly empty, partly held by 40 men of the 108th Infantry under Lieut. Donnecker.⁹⁸ Farther south the 41st Battalion, with whom were 100 Americans,⁹⁹ entered the same trench, capturing 5 machine-guns and got touch with the 38th. On the left the 40th, already in Willow Trench with the Americans, was just sending its scouts¹⁰⁰ to precede the advance when the order was cancelled. The reserve brigade (9th) had resumed its advance, but telescoped into the 10th and came to a standstill.¹

Brig.-Genl. Cannan, 11th Brigade, on receiving the order obtained a promise from the commander of the 108th American Infantry that he would send a reserve battalion. No American reinforcement, however, arrived in time to take part in the attack, in which

the 44th and 41st were ordered to advance east, and the 42nd to bomb northwards up the Hindenburg and Hindenburg Outpost systems behind them. But in the Hindenburg Line a bomb attack was



already raging, having been ordered by Lieut.-Col. Clark² (44th) after visiting the front. At the Tunnel Capt. Longmore had organised an advance for 300 yards along the

⁹⁸ Capt. Charles J. Donnecker, 108th Amer. Inf. Regt. (awarded Brit. M.C.).

⁹⁹ Reorganised in three platoons including a 1-pdr. gun's crew.

¹⁰⁰ Many Germans were in the sunken Gillemont Farm-Bony road, and the scouts of the 40th under Sgt. Billing, with Lewis-gunners, had crept out to a position from which they brought deadly fire on these; 70 Americans with 100 prisoners had been there earlier, cut off.

¹ The 33rd was kept back by Gellibrand to guard the left, and the 34th also served usefully as a flank guard. Leaderless Americans west of the Knoll asked its officers to help reorganise them. The 54th Brit. Bde. helped similarly north of the Knoll.

² Col. J. P. Clark, D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 44th Bn., 1917-19. Barrister and solicitor; of Hobart; b. Hobart, 2 Feb. 1878.

western side of the mound; but there the ground dipped into Vauban Valley, and the exposed party was fired into by a field-gun on Bony ridge *north-west* of the mound and fell back to Tunnel Sap. Here 44th and Americans beat off a counter-attack by 100 Germans, who assembled down the valley but were driven to shelter in the air shafts along the mound. Later a weaker attack was easily beaten. The attack up both trenches of the Hindenburg Line began soon after mid-day, the 44th taking over the task from the 59th.³ Fighting all the afternoon Capt. Bremner's company won the second trench up to the cutting of the Bellicourt road. In the first trench Lieut. Mitchinson⁴ was stopped near the junction with Top Lane. About 3 p.m. Capt. Warry's company of the 42nd reinforced the 44th in this fighting, though the rest of the 42nd was stopped by a cancelling order.⁵ The Germans counter-attacked but were driven off with loss, their trench-mortar in Bony being silenced by the machine-gunners in Top Lane. Later the other companies of the 42nd were brought up, but the line was already so crowded that Capt. O'Bryen⁶ withdrew them—throughout this day officers at the front had constantly to make such important decisions. About 4 p.m. the Germans at Top Lane junction tried to advance along the Lane but were driven off by the crews of Slater's two machine-guns.⁷

At the Hindenburg Outpost-Line the 41st tried to get through with patrols. One platoon bombed a barricade near Quennet Copse. A Lewis-gunner jumping on the parapet hosed the German machine-gun positions, but was shot dead, as was Lieut. Dodds,⁸ who got out to lead his men. Several such efforts were made, the battalion losing this day 9 officers

³ The 59th had been using German bombs, its own having run short. A tank cleared 150 yards of trench but then was ditched.

⁴ Lt. D. E. Mitchinson, 44th Bn. Clerk; of Claremont, W.A.; b. Rottneist Island, W.A., 28 Nov. 1894.

⁵ Warry did not receive this, though it reached Lts. E. A. Jolly (Rockhampton, Q'land) and J. F. Wood (Kaimkillenbun, Q'land), who were with him throughout the fight. In the rear companies Lt. G. M. T. Browne (Toowoomba, Q'land), a fine leader, was mortally wounded.

⁶ Capt. R. deB. F. O'Bryen, 42nd Bn. Business manager; of Townsville, Q'land; b. Liverpool, N.S.W., 29 June 1894.

⁷ The sentry, Pte. N. P. Macfie (Beulah West, Vic.) stopped them first with his revolver; Sgt. Adlam and his men used their rifles. No infantry joined the guard there till 9 p.m., when a platoon of the 42nd came up.

⁸ Lt. G. S. Dodds, 41st Bn. Company manager; of Sandgate, Q'land; b. Edinburgh, Scotland, 1877. Died of wounds, 29 Sep. 1918.

and 60 men. Advance without artillery support was then clearly impossible.

The attack eastwards from the Tunnel mound was planned by Cols. Denehy (57th) and Watson (58th). Five Mark V tanks and eight whippets had been collected near Watson's headquarters behind the mound.⁹ The heavy tanks were to lead the infantry across the le Catelet line; the whippets would then go through and race round Estrées. Capt. Loughnan (58th) arranged with the party of 44th on his left to advance at the same time. (The 59th now, having been located by its brigade, was recalled into reserve at the Bellicourt tunnel mouth.)

At 3 p.m. the supporting artillery brigade (14th) put down a barrage—necessarily very thin—on a front of 2,000 yards; and tanks, Australians and Americans advanced from the mound.¹⁰ On all this battlefield the ground was open and when they crossed the railway and neared the crest they were met by a murderous fire from the le Catelet line, Cabaret Wood Farm, and the semi-circle of positions to the north. Field-guns fired direct, hitting all the heavy tanks and half the whippets. In the 58th Battalion, going straight for the highest ground, Lieuts. Keane,¹¹ Weir¹² and Johnson¹³ were killed, Capt. Dawson wounded¹⁴ and half the men quickly hit. The left got into the le Catelet line and held on; the right was stopped short of it.¹⁵ But in the 57th Battalion, which was forced to dash from shell-hole to shell-hole, Lieut. Meara dribbled his men half-right behind the railway bank around the shoulder of the hill, thus sheltering them against the terrible fire from the north. Working up the depression there they reached the le Catelet line precisely at the left of the 29th

⁹ By Majors J. A. Bennewith and W. E. H. Scupham.

¹⁰ Tanks ahead, then screen of scouts, then groups of sections in file. Some of the Americans were organised by Cpl. R. G. Stephenson (Bathurst, N.S.W.; died 8 Apr. 1933).

¹¹ Lt. J. M. Keane, 58th Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Prahran, Vic.; b. Adelaide, 28 Oct. 1888. Killed in action, 29 Sep. 1918.

¹² Lt. F. J. Weir, 58th Bn. Bank inspector; of Nhili, Vic.; b. Busselton, W.A., 16 June 1878. Killed in action, 29 Sep. 1918.

¹³ Lt. F. R. Johnson, 58th Bn. Grazier; of South Yarra and Lilydale, Vic.; b. Kew, Vic., 16 Sep. 1883. Killed in action, 29 Sep. 1918.

¹⁴ Lt. C. K. D. Campbell (Melbourne) was mortally wounded in this battle.

¹⁵ Lt. N. Dalgleish, though wounded in the head, held on, controlling the situation here close to the le Catelet line and in touch with the 57th and with Col. Watson.

Battalion (8th Bde.), and turned northward along that trench. Capt. Keys passed his company through Meara's and bombed to a point south of the farm.¹⁶

The 15th Brigade thus secured a good foothold in the le Catelet line, but the tank fort at Cabaret Wood Farm was unapproachable without strong cover by artillery. The 29th had not advanced at 3 p.m. because its left had been dangerously exposed to fire from the farm.¹⁷ Now, however, it would be able to push on to Nauroy, and did so after dark, relieving the 30th, and placing a line of posts facing the German anti-tank forts at the Lamp Signal Station¹⁸ and Sugar Factory.

Out with the 32nd, Wark, into whose left flank and rear Germans were firing from the Sugar Factory, drew back 1,000 yards his line south of Joncourt, strengthening his touch with both flanks. He now faced at 2,000 yards' distance the high ground—Mill Ridge—between Joncourt and Estrées. Just then there advanced from it some 400 Germans in artillery formation. The 32nd, the 31st south of Nauroy, the British on the right, and a battery of Royal Horse Artillery in rear opened with every weapon. The Germans took cover in shell-holes and stopped, the nearest being 500 yards from the 32nd.

This famous day's fighting had ended.¹⁹ From then till now the story has been widespread²⁰ of how the 27th (New York) Division, exceedingly brave but very raw, broke through the Hindenburg Line and dashed to the first objective without mopping up; whereupon Germans at once emerged in rear from the elaborate tunnel shelters and elsewhere, cut off the Americans and barred the Australian advance. The 30th American Division, though also believed to have rushed to its objective, is praised for having

¹⁶ Five officers of the 57th and many men had been hit. Lt. L. Cockram (Brighton, Vic.), was hit a second time in the le Catelet line.

¹⁷ Some tanks, however, went through Nauroy at 3 p.m.

¹⁸ Capt. Read's company here occupied the railway cutting. Throughout the fight Derham frequently consulted him.

¹⁹ The distinguished visitors, like the other rear echelons, had run up against it, and two of them—Sir Joseph Cook (Australian Minister for the Navy) and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (the creator of Sherlock Holmes)—to their intense delight, standing on top of an abandoned tank watched the advance of the 5th Div. beyond Bellicourt until they themselves were shelled, and then ate their sandwiches among the Diggers in a neighbouring trench. Conan Doyle described this day's experience in *The Times*.

²⁰ Not, however, in the careful narrative of Gen. O'Ryan.

cleared the ground better, allowing the Australians to get farther. This story, given in all the reports of the time, including Rawlinson's and Monash's, is partly based on a report made on the evening of September 29th by an Australian artillery observer, to the effect that, following American infantry, he himself had advanced through the Hindenburg Line north of Bony and had seen 100 Americans reach the outskirts of le Catelet. This led even Gellibrand to believe that a considerable body of the 27th Division had reached its objective.²¹ To-day, however, numerous records of both sides are available.²² From study of these the true course of events can be outlined with some assurance.

In the attack on September 27th the 106th Infantry went in, according to General O'Ryan, with about 2,000 rifles, but as its commander, Col. Taylor,²³ pointed out the day before, exceedingly short of officers—
The truth, September 27 actually with only 18 officers in its twelve companies. This shortage appears to have been general in the two American divisions and, says O'Ryan, was due to American G.H.Q.'s sending away many officers to schools. On September 27th the front of attack was 4,000 yards, rather over 1,300 yards to a battalion, and the depth 1,000-1,500. An Australian brigade at that time, though reduced to 1,200 rifles, might have undertaken the task, but would have put in at least 40 company officers, and many N.C.O.'s with equal experience, and would have required all its skill and "bluff" to succeed.

The barrage that morning included 15 per cent. of smoke shell—5 per cent. more than covered the Australians on September 18th. The day was wet and the smoke-mist appar-

²¹ The present writer, like all others, believed him, and wrote at the time: "There is not the slightest doubt that . . . the Americans reached Gouy." He went on to give his impression of them, which has not changed: "never in this war have I seen keener or braver soldiers, or more intelligent and high minded men."

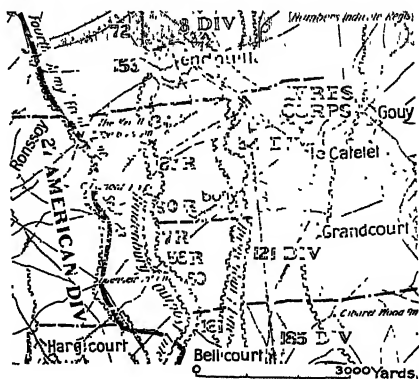
²² Besides the Australian records the following have been studied for this day's events: notes, extracts and maps from the British, American, and German Army records, kindly made available by their authorities, including the remarkably impartial studies of the American Battle Monuments Commission; histories of the 27th Div., and 107th Infantry; histories of the following German regiments then in the front line: 72nd, 153rd (8th Div.), 84th, 27th Res., 90th Res. (54th Div.), 60th (121st Div.), 65th, 28th Res. (185th Div.), 251st Res., 55th F.A.R. (75th Res. Div.), 4th Gren., 33rd, 44th (2nd Div.), and of the following in support or reserve: 1st Gd. Gren., and Gd. Gren. (2nd Gd. Div.), 80th and 87th Div. (21st Div.), 46th Res. (119th Div.).

²³ Col. William A. Taylor. Commanded 106th Amer. Inf. Regt., 1917-19.

ently less dense than on the 29th, but the light was very dim and both tanks and troops found it difficult to see. The task of the few American officers in trying with their compasses to keep direction for the troops may be judged by the experiences of the Australian officers, three times more numerous, on August 8th or September 18th. Inevitably the regiment split into small groups out of touch with each other. Parts of the mopping up companies, advancing where there were gaps in the line ahead, necessarily acted as front line; Germans unseen in the mist were left behind.

The attack reached the Hindenburg Outpost-Line but at separated points. It captured the Knoll, a sector between Gillemont Farm and Quennemont Farm, and another south of this. Some Americans at least then tried to work right and left, but the fighting was very heavy; the company officers sacrificed themselves most devotedly, and, of the eighteen, seventeen were killed or wounded. The men, left leaderless, were too inexperienced to know their tasks or even to recognise many of the dangers threatening them.

The German line there was held (from north to south) by the regiments shown in the marginal sketch. All were weak but not so weak as those then in reserve after being mauled by the Australians at Mont St. Quentin and the Hindenburg Outpost-Line: and their spirits had been raised by their repeated success against the local attacks by III Corps. Their H.W.L. apparently ran from near Tombois Farm to Gillemont Farm and thence along the Hindenburg Outpost-Line. German accounts say that the attack was expected, but that between the Knoll and Gillemont Farm the Americans and some tanks passed the III/84th and cut it off in the mist, as well as two forward companies of the 27th R.I.R. The III/84th and one company of the 27th were captured, but the I/84th from the Hindenburg Main Line, and, farther south, some support and reserve companies of the 27th Res. counter-attacked, as did the isolated company of the 27th. The history of that regiment says that the Americans "at first offered resistance with machine-



guns," but their spirit later succumbed. One German company "pushed on without troubling about the Americans, who were in trenches." Another German party "came up against an enemy party who were trying to mop up but they did not yet understand that work; on the contrary the German party threw them back with bombs and then shot them to bits with rifle-grenades." The counter-attacking German reserves eventually got through and released the company that had been cut off. At Gillemont Farm the 90th R.I.R. had by 7.5 a.m. beaten off attacks on its northern sector, and at 8.10, by counter-attack, it cleared its southern sector, capturing 50 Americans. The Americans who entered the first trench about Quennemont Farm had by 7.15 been counter-attacked from the second trench by the garrison of the 60th I.R. reinforced by half a battalion from the Hindenburg Line, the Americans withdrawing under machine-gun fire towards Malakoff Farm.²⁴ The history of the 27th R.I.R. says: "The Americans made a middling impression on our troops; they appear very unskilled in attack; in close fighting they mostly were very helpless and lacking in dash." By evening the forward zone had been cleared except that, as generally happened, a few men had been overlooked. After examining the captured men some Germans concluded that they lacked morale and it has been stated that the German troops were afterwards ordered to exploit this discovery.

That judgment was certainly wrong; nearly every Australian report on the Americans speaks of their morale as outstandingly high. But the task of attacking such defences in a smoke screen asked far too much of their training, and resulted in disastrous failure. The casualties of the 27th Division this day are given by General O'Ryan as 1,540.

The Americans reported by airmen to be still in the Hindenburg Outpost-Line on September 28th
September 28 must, if really seen, have been either dead or a few whom the enemy had missed.

According to German accounts that sector was now quiet, as indeed it would be, since—except in rear—it escaped the preparation for the greater attack. The German soldiers enjoyed the food from the American packs. Farther south the German line was held, as shown in the marginal sketch, the 185th Divn. (twice battered by the Australians and with no subsequent success to cheer it) being very weak.²⁵ Remnants of the 2nd Guard and 21st Divns.—each now equivalent to a weak regiment—were eight or nine miles back at Clary and Prémont in reserve to the IV Reserve and 51st Corps respectively. The preliminary bombardment missed the troops opposite the 27th American Division, but a regimental history of the 185th Divn. speaks of it on September

²⁴ The 60th I.R. claims to have captured 12 Americans; the 90th R.I.R., 50; the 27th R.I.R. two officers and many men.

²⁵ The fighting strength of the 65th I.R., for example, including machine-gunners, T.M. batteries and H.Q. was 22 officers and 353 men; its nominal strength was 48 officers and 1,453 men.

rifles, and an infantry escort. The infantry was also supported by attached sections of field batteries and by "close fighting batteries"—methods in which the Germans were far more practised and skilful than most British or Dominion forces and to which they resorted more than ever after the "tank battle" of August 8th. Also their artillery was now always disposed in depth to meet the danger of tanks. In the waves of fog which lasted till 10 a.m.²⁸ Capt. Byrd²⁹ of the 120th Infantry and three or four men passed the le Catelet line and railway north of Nauroy and reached their objective or a point very near it. During a lift of the fog several aeroplanes flew low over them. As, after twenty minutes, no other Americans were seen—though indeed numbers could have been unseen in the fog—the party returned, safely.³⁰

The 119th broke through the Hindenburg Line, and crossed the Tunnel mound north of Bellicourt. Most of it was stopped—evidently by the Cabaret Wood tank forts—at the railway and trenches west of the le Catelet line near Cabaret Wood Farm; but at least one tank³¹ went on in the mist half a mile beyond the American objective.

The history of the 65th I.R. says, "We saw 2,000 metres behind us, at Folemprie Farm, tanks which were smashed in our battery positions."

It is possible that this tank and a few scattered men were seen by the British airmen who flew over in the thinning mist, and that they reported the Americans on their objective. Except for the tank and for some troops who entered the le Catelet line north of the 65th I.R. (and some of whom were captured) the available German histories mention no penetration of the le Catelet line before the mist rose.

The 117th Infantry, which was to form the southern flank, cleared most of the Germans from its front west of the canal

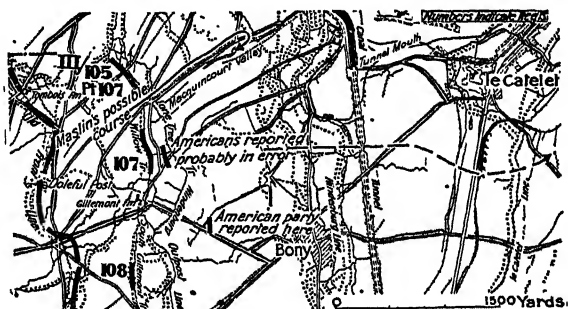
²⁸ The smoke screen on the southern flank was to move southward after 8.32 a.m. in order to allow the 117th Infantry to advance in that direction. West of the canal, on this flank, No. 4 Special Coy., R.E., laid a heavy smoke screen between the flanks of the 30th Amer. Div. and IX Corps. The smoke screen on the northern flank apparently ended about 9 a.m., but smoke and mist remained.

²⁹ Capt. Thomas Byrd, "G" Coy., 120th Amer. Inf. Regt.

³⁰ To the Hindenburg Line. Here Byrd found a number of men of the 120th and 117th. He led those of the 120th forward again, mopped up the trenches and dugouts south-east of Bellicourt, and then pushed on across the Bellicourt-Nauroy road. Soon there reached him Maj. W. A. Graham commanding the 11/120th with a mixed party. Their forces reorganised in the road and it was they whom the Australians found there.

³¹ Of "A" Coy., 1st Bn., Royal Tank Corps.

flank, beyond the Tunnel, appear to have marched in the smoke down a sunken road through the lines of the 107th and of the Germans without seeing either. Then, sighting the Germans behind them, one of these battalions, the I/105th, turned and charged, capturing the remnants of the garrison of this sector (84th I.R.). Believing that the 107th was still ahead but had failed to mop up, the commander of this battalion, Capt. Maslin,³⁵ went on with three companies, as he says, for "about a mile,"³⁶ until he began to come up against Germans. He then withdrew to the other battalion, III/105th, on the Knoll. Undoubtedly many Americans here in the fog penetrated down Macquincourt and Claymore Valleys³⁷ and possibly some fight-



American positions (Bony and north) about 10 a.m.

ing occurred at the Hindenburg Line; but an investigator at the *Reichsarchiv*, who, for the purpose of this history, kindly enquired into this and other matters, mentions no penetration there, nor do the German regimental histories, including that of the 84th I.R. It seems likely, therefore, that the Australian observer's report of a thrust to le Catelet was mistaken.³⁸

³⁵ Capt. Henry Maslin, 105th Amer. Inf. Regt.

³⁶ Probably down Macquincourt Valley. Several tanks went that way towards Vendhuile. Maslin does not mention passing the main Hindenburg Line.

³⁷ An officer of the 107th, Lt. H. Adsit, with some machine-gunners believed that he penetrated in the smoke, just beyond the Hindenburg Line. He may have done so, but the position he eventually held was certainly in the Hindenburg Outpost-Line.

³⁸ The history of the 27th German R.I.R., describing the attack by armoured cars on Bony, says that they approached it "ignorant of the position" (implying that no chance of penetration there existed). If, however, troops were really seen beyond they were presumably Maslin's, and therefore returned long before noon. Gen. O'Ryan's carefully written history of the 27th Division contains no account of such penetration; like everyone else he believed in it at the time, but evidently after the war he corrected this impression. Two tanks are said to have crossed the main Hindenburg Line and returned safely.

Farther north the 54th British Brigade advanced and held on with great stubbornness well ahead of the Knoll. Farther south the right of the 107th Regiment had taken the first Hindenburg Outpost trench (Willow Trench) but fire from Gillemont Farm and the ridge beyond stopped it half way to the second. The farm itself could not be taken, and flanking fire from there wrecked the left of the 108th crossing the trenches farther south. A few men reached the forked roads west of Bony where the armoured cars were afterwards smashed, and in the smoke part of the right battalion penetrated south of Quennemont Farm, where a party under Lieuts. Brown³⁹ and Uhl⁴⁰ apparently reached the Hindenburg Line taking more than 100 prisoners.⁴¹ From there southwards the 30th Division broke through that line.

As before, a high proportion of the few officers was hit⁴² and their men were leaderless. After the attack on Gillemont Farm the only company commander there who was not killed (Capt. Bradish⁴³) crawled back to some British tanks, guided them towards the farm, and organised remnants of his troops to follow. The tanks that he had met were those attached to the 10th Australian Infantry Brigade, but their officers decided they must fight to clear the situation. One tank after another was hit,⁴⁴ and Bradish's party, losing heavily, fell back towards the old front line. Soon afterwards he advanced with part of the 105th to Willow Trench.

German narratives bear out these accounts and particularly stress the density of the smoke. The history of the 84th I.R. states that the regiment was completely blinded. Gen. Kabisch (54th Divn.) says the same. The history of the 90th R.I.R. says: "During the whole attack the enemy keeps the smoke so strong that one cannot see a man until a few yards away." Apparently reports of serious attack on the northern half of the battlefield reached headquarters of the German IV Res. Corps first from its flank divisions—those facing the III Corps and

**German
accounts**

³⁹ Capt. Samuel A. Brown, D.S.C., 108th Amer. Inf. Regt.

⁴⁰ Lt. Harrison J. Uhl, 108th Amer. Inf. Regt. (was awarded Brit. M.C.).

⁴¹ They afterwards came under Col. Scanlan.

⁴² In the front companies of the I and III/107th every officer but one—and in the support battalion every company officer—was killed or wounded. In the III/108th every officer of the front companies was killed or wounded (6 killed, 2 wounded). The support regiment, 105th, suffered in proportion. Even the remnant of the 106th, now 350 strong, under Maj. Ransom H. Gillet, lost all officers but four.

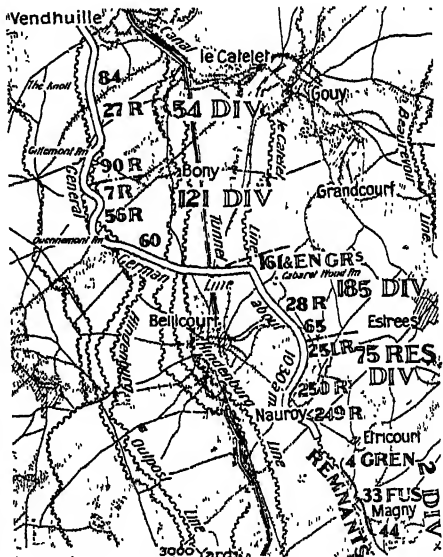
⁴³ Capt. George B. Bradish. Commanded "K" Coy., 107th Amer. Inf. Regt.

⁴⁴ One ran on the line of British mines.

the extreme right of the 27th American Divn.; the centre division, 54th, was at that stage reported to be attacked only by patrols. The tanks are said to have been destroyed or turned back, but following this the weight of the assault came upon the Knoll and Quennemont Farm. The line of the 84th I.R. was pierced at several points and then mopped up from the rear. Remnants fell back on Hidden Trench. The 27th R.I.R. clung to the second trench of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line (Lone Tree Trench), the Americans lying "entirely defenceless" in front of it. Where the Americans penetrated to it they were driven out by the support companies. As the light improved a strong column with tanks appeared coming down Macquincourt Valley and here the 8th and 54th Divns. had to fight for the Hindenburg Line. The 27th R.I.R. had four "tank forts," and these tanks and others following them were hit.⁴⁵ Fifty Americans found retiring (possibly Maslin's party) were "wiped out."

By 11 a.m. the parts of the 27th American Divn. that had penetrated beyond the Hindenburg Outpost-Line had been driven back except on the southern flank. There the 121st German Divn. about Quennemont Farm was forced back both north and south of the farm, the 56th I.R. and the left of the 90th R.I.R. being driven from the Outpost-Line, but for the time being attacks on the centre of the 121st Division were beaten off.

The 30th American Divn. (which launched its attack from the official "start-line") forced back the left of the 121st Divn. and the whole of the 185th⁴⁶ and 75th Reserve, to the le Catelet line (then serving as the "Artillery Protection Line"), towards which the southern flank of the 27th Divn. also drove. Two engineer companies helped the 185th to hold this line near Cabaret Wood Farm, and at Nauroy the 75th Reserve was greatly helped by two detached sections of field-guns of the 55th F.A.R., especially by the sections at Nauroy Wood. The 251st R.I.R. heard no word from its company in Bellicourt. The 117th Infantry and 32nd Australian Bn. moved in



⁴⁵ Germans say that the Americans manned one as a strong-post behind the German lines and apparently got back to their lines after dark. One tank fort during the day destroyed seven tanks.

⁴⁶ Tanks had got behind the headquarters of the 28th R.I.R. Count Wolff-Metternich, commanding the II/28th, was killed fighting beside his runners.

rear of parts of the 75th Res. Divn. farther south, the 32nd heading into the back area of the 2nd Divn. through whose front the 46th Brit. Divn. broke at Bellenglise and Riqueval.

Bellicourt Tunnel and its passages seem to have played but a slight part in this day's fighting. There is no evidence that Germans emerged from the tunnel behind the Americans.⁴⁷ It became the talk of the battle ground for a different reason—the supposed discovery of a "corpse-boiling-down factory" in a chamber above the southern entrance.⁴⁸

Australians, Monash among them, have criticised the Americans for that day's failure. Their judgment is based on ignorance of the facts; never, indeed, was criticism more unjust. American G.H.Q. knew that its troops were insufficiently trained, and had impressed on the Australian journalists who visited it during the previous winter that the eventuality it most desired to avoid was the sending of its troops into battle before they were sufficiently trained, which, it well knew would mean heavy loss. Yet it realised that, in the general interest of the Allies, it might some day be necessary to break this rule; if so, the Americans were prepared to make the sacrifice entailed—and this day they did so.⁴⁹

The British command, under which they had trained, and Monash, on the strength of his experience of other Americans at Hamel and Chipilly, had been very ready to accept their help. Monash was afterwards shocked by their extreme inexperience. Nearly all reports from Australians serving beside them emphasised it, especially in respect of supply and administration. In this fighting their water, rations, and ammunition arrived often irregularly, sometimes not at all. Some troops who had been without food for a day returned to obtain it. In action, the men without their leaders were lost, helpless and listless.

Had the true story of Hamel or Chipilly⁵⁰ been known to

⁴⁷ A German account says it was safe but "fuggy."

⁴⁸ The place was visited by everyone that could get there. It was really an improvised kitchen, in which a shell had exploded beside a carrying party, throwing one man, uniform and all, into a cauldron, and strewing the rest on the floor. Some tins of salvage fat were on a shelf, and a riddled hot-food container (now in the Australian War Memorial) on the floor. The myth that the Germans boiled down their dead, once most unfortunately exploited through a blunder of the British propaganda system, was by this time generally discredited; and the genuine mistake of those who first found this chamber was quickly corrected.

⁴⁹ See diary of Aust. War Correspondent quoted on pp. 260-1.

⁵⁰ See pp. 330-2 and 650.

Monash he could not have set for inexperienced troops the task that he did; but Monash often lacked knowledge of what had happened in battle. On this day, as on the 27th, the impetuous rush that he and others supposed to have been made by the Americans to their objectives never took place. Nor did resistance come chiefly from Germans left behind by the Americans; it came from supports and reserves counter-attacking normally from the front. Nor did a line of Americans hold their objective, with Germans in rear, on either September 27th or 29th. With insufficient experience and far too few officers they attacked in fog and smoke—some men indeed thought it was gas—and were split up. Most of their officers were lost in the fierce fighting where they entered the German line at separate points with enemy strong-points unseen in the smoke beside them. Nevertheless on the 29th, on those parts of the front on which the Germans had been subjected to bombardment and were attacked under close cover of the barrage, the smoke helped both the 30th American Division and the British to penetrate.

But it is hard to believe that the 27th Division ever had a chance of success. To its original task of penetration, "deeper" as Monash said, "than we have ever had before," there had since been added what surely no Australian divisional commander would have attempted—a preliminary advance of 1,200 yards against the Hindenburg Outpost-Line without a barrage. Monash was not wholly to blame; he had wished to dispense with the preliminary operation and adjust his barrage. Also the American commanders themselves believed that their patrols could steal most of the ground up to the official start-line before zero hour. But the result was that the most brilliant battle plan that Monash ever drew—his solution for what he envisaged as mainly a problem of roadmaking—broke down largely through his underestimation of the human element. For the first time since August 8th his attack did not go "according to plan" and the American divisions paid dearly for their first experience.⁵¹ Yet, if that day's results

⁵¹ Not more dearly, however, than had most Australian ones. The 1st Aust. Div. lost about 5,000 at the Landing; the 2nd 6,848 in the first tour at Pozzières; the 5th 5,533 at Fromelles. The 27th American Div. (with many more men) lost on Sep. 27-30 about 5,000 and the 30th 1,881.

could not have been achieved by other means, the loss was worth it.

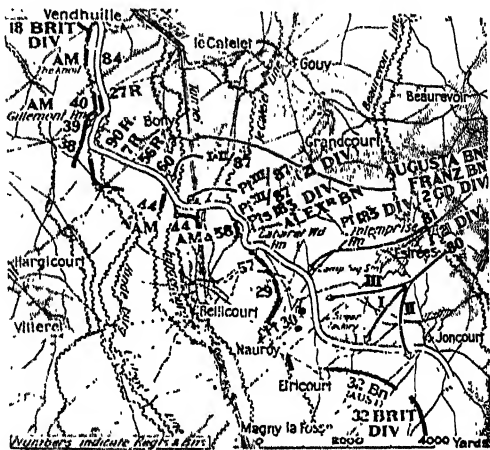
By 10 o'clock Monash's plan had gone to the winds, though he did not yet realise it. Actually all American troops that remained in the front line were just ahead of the Australians, or the Australians were penetrating among them. The American divisional commanders were still in charge of the front and of the main body of artillery, but their communications with the battle line were broken. They knew where few of their troops were; those troops were split up, largely leaderless, in many cases wandering to the rear—as many Australians had done at the Gallipoli Landing—seeking anyone who would tell them what to do. From that hour onward, except at the Knoll, the offensive was really directed by Australian battalion or company commanders at the front, whose communications were mostly intact, and who acted and then informed the higher commanders, who in turn confirmed the policy or sent a new one.

It remains to complete the description of German action. On hearing of the attack the Second Army and its Army Corps, knowing (as will be seen later) that they must expect no help from outside, called on their battle-worn reserves. The **German reaction** IV Reserve Corps (responsible for the sector from Vendhuille to Cabaret Wood Farm) ordered the 2nd Guard Divn., now one regiment of three battalions, to come from Clary in lorries. The 51st Corps, next on the south, similarly ordered up the 21st Divn. (then comprising the 80th and 81st Regts.). The 87th I.R., which had previously been detached as reserve to the 121st Divn., immediately placed itself under that division, the telephone lines being broken. Farther back the battered 119th Divn. was alarmed.

On most of the 27th American Divn.'s front the Germans noted the arrival of the Australians as a "new attack" which could make no headway. The intrusion of the 44th and 59th Bns. among the Americans at the Hindenburg Line and Tunnel mound occurred just before the arrival from reserve of the 87th I.R., which was ordered to make a flank north of them, its III Bn. remaining in the le Catelet line north of Cabaret Wood Farm and the I and II hurrying to the 60th I.R. south of Bony. The 60th forthwith used two companies of the 87th to stop the Australians, then bombing up the Hindenburg Line northwards: it was these Germans that attacked the bomb stops. A third company of the 87th was presently thrown into that fight, in which two German company commanders were killed. A fourth held a communication sap between the two trenches. At 2 p.m. two companies of the III/87th from the le Catelet line were ordered to occupy the open spur east of the Hindenburg Line. Here, together with a company of engineers (241st) and one of

the 56th R.I.R., they formed a flank facing south.⁵² Meanwhile the 60th I.R. and 7th R.I.R. were prised out of the Hindenburg Outpost-Line and during the late morning fell back gradually north-east of Quennemont Farm to a position half-way to Bony.

Monash's thrust at 3 p.m. at Cabaret Wood Farm was met frontally by the two engineer companies, the reserve company of the 87th and remnants of the 65th I.R. (185th Divn.) in the le Catelet line, and the 3rd M.G. Coy. of the 87th, the Alexander Guard Bn.⁵³ and some anti-tank guns at the Farm, and was enfiladed from the north by the III/87th, 241st Engineer Coy. and artillery. A gun behind the III/87th opened first, followed immediately by those in Soult Valley (S.E. of Grandcourt) which hit tank after tank and drove the infantry to shelter. One tank reached the le Catelet line and scattered to north and south the company of the III/87th that garrisoned it there—possibly it was here that the 58th Bn. got in. The remnants of the 185th Divn. driven out of the le Catelet line assembled at Folemprie Farm together with some of their transport personnel, the machine-gunners of the 35th and 75th S.S. Detachments, and some attached field-guns, and were placed under the 121st Divn. Later in the afternoon the three battalions of the 2nd Guard Divn.—Augusta, Franz, and Alexander—reinforced the dangerous flank between Bony and Cabaret Wood Farm.



Farther south it was the guns of the 55th F.A.R. at Nauroy park that hit the 29th Bn.'s tanks; the history of the 251st R.I.R. (75th Res. Divn.) says that the attack on the le Catelet line there began at 11 a.m. "with tanks and advanced batteries." It was repulsed but renewed at 11.45. Nauroy was lost in a third attack with tanks at 12.45. It was a heavy machine-gun and a few men of the II/251st that stopped the 29th where the railway crossed le Catelet Trench. About 4 p.m. this post was driven out by a tank coming from Cabaret Wood Farm. Meanwhile the I/81st I.R. (21st Divn.) had come up to the Lamp Signal Station north of Nauroy and took over the sector.

Farther south again the 32nd Bn., as it headed into the back area of the 2nd German Divn., whose reserves had been largely trapped by the

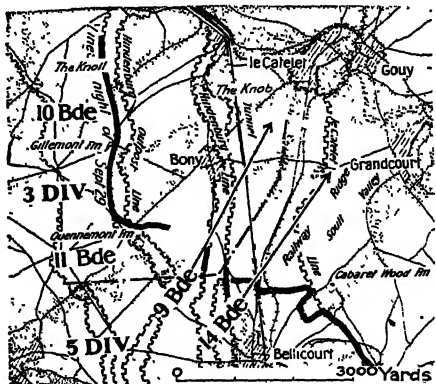
⁵² In doing this the III/87th captured 60 prisoners—clearly some isolated party of Americans.

⁵³ This battalion (with T.M. and M.G. coys. and H.Q.) was 523 strong.

46th Brit. Divn. in the Tronquoy tunnel, was faced by at least one group of the 33rd Fusilier Regt. with a machine-gun and, at Magny-la-Fosse, by survivors of the 44th I.R. But the way was practically open until the 21st German Divn. came up, after a pause at the Beaurevoir Line, to the high ground between Nauroy and Joncourt. The 81st occupied the Lamp Signal Station; the III/80th came up on its left; and the I and II/80th were ordered at 3 p.m. to advance between Estrées and Joncourt and retake Etricourt and the le Catelet line. They moved at 4 p.m. The history of the 80th says that they met and stopped an attack by their opponents towards Joncourt, an advanced German battery north of Joncourt destroying several tanks. The 80th was stopped south of Nauroy Sugar Factory, and, after dark, was withdrawn to a line from the Factory to Joncourt, its III Bn. being brought back to Joncourt Station. Its right touched the 81st I.R. east of Nauroy.

That night the 119th Divn. was brought up by motor transport to Busigny and later was ordered to the Beaurevoir Line. The German artillery from east of Nauroy withdrew to between Wiancourt and Montbrehain.

At 4.5 p.m. General Monash who had just heard of the failure to break through what he still believed to be "isolated portions" of the German garrison, decided to transfer the 3rd Division's reserve brigade (9th) to the protruding southern flank of its division,⁵⁴ to attack northwards behind the Hindenburg Line. Shortly afterwards he decided that the 5th Division also should throw its reserve brigade, the 14th, northwards astride the le Catelet line along Railway Ridge. The 9th Brigade, now, would advance astride the main Hindenburg Line along Bony Ridge. The two brigades would clear the ground as far as the northern tunnel entrance and the flats south of le Catelet, where touch would be gained with the Americans whom he supposed to be still there. Actually the Australians' task was,



Intended attack shown by arrows.

⁵⁴ It will be recalled that this was the movement anticipated by Col. Jess and Gen. Gellibrand that morning (see p. 977).

as it had been since they entered the battle, to make good by their fighting skill¹, without the advantage of surprise or of any use of the artillery on a grand scale, a great part of the American objectives as well as their own.

Monash had been aware since September 27th of the inexperience of the Americans in battle administration; and, as their units in the front line must now be too disorganised and under-officered for effective tactical control, he urged Rawlinson, when the plan for next day was being discussed, that they should be withdrawn to rest as soon as they could be spared from the front. After conference with General Read this was decided on. Rawlinson had intended to transfer the II American Corps to the left of the Australian Corps after this battle and, after taking the Beaurevoir Line, to push eastwards with the IX, Australian and II American Corps in front, XIII Corps on the left and XV French Corps on the right. Now, however, the immediate task had been changed. IX Corps must help the Australians to approach the Beaurevoir Line so that this could be quickly attacked on a wide front. Accordingly IX Corps would press north-east to Joncourt as well as east to Preselles and Sequehart.⁵⁵ Australian Corps would attack not only north but also east, so as to confront the Beaurevoir Line at Estrées, Folemprie Farm, and the southern outskirts of Gouy. III Corps would occupy Vendhuile and help the Australians with artillery. XIII Corps would relieve the III Corps at noon on the 30th and later take over the part of the Australian front that faced north. After this it would advance north-east clearing the way for Third Army. The 5th Cavalry Brigade was transferred from Australian to IX Corps.

About 7 p.m., a conference with Rawlinson having ended, the divisional plans were discussed by telephone. The main difficulty was that Army headquarters rejected suggestions for employing artillery on the 3rd Division's front, ruling that no target within the original *final* objective might be shelled.⁵⁶ The American commanders had naturally objected to any use of artillery that might endanger the position of their troops as reported by airmen. In conference with Gellibrand, however,

⁵⁵ It would also complete the capture of le Tronquoy tunnel defences to let the XV French Corps cross.

⁵⁶ Gen. Monash had promised Gellibrand and Hobbs command of all the divisional artillery.

General O'Ryan agreed to permit a barrage on the Hindenburg Line which was obviously in German hands, and the same argument applied to the le Catelet line and Tunnel mound. At a late hour orders were given for creeping barrages by field artillery on those areas during the coming attack, but the prohibition on the use of heavy artillery within the final objective remained.

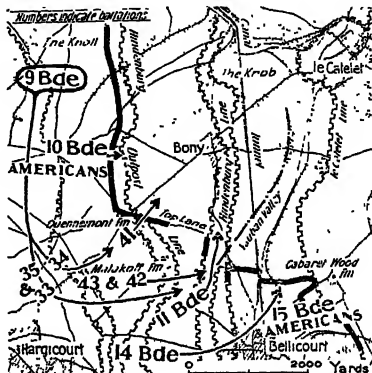
While these plans were being made a drizzle, starting at 5 p.m., had increased to steady rain, flooding trenches and dugouts. Quartermasters and transport officers of the Australian battalions, having located their fighting troops as far as possible during the afternoon, now struggled through the mud to find the battalion dumps while the cooks and wagons with food and ammunition waited about Ronssoy or Bellicourt. Several of these officers and their men were killed in this duty but the records state that the prompt arrival that night of this warming food and drink among the wet, worn-out infantry in the front line literally "saved the situation."⁵⁷ The Americans in the front line with the 3rd Division shared this food and ammunition.⁵⁸

Meanwhile on this wet battlefield, cratered, and crossed by belts of thick wire and wide muddy trenches, tanks and infantry moved for the attack through the protruding flank, to help in safeguarding which the II/118th U.S. Infantry also came up. At 9.25 p.m. Brig.-Genl. Goddard (9th Bde.) warned his battalions, but at the same time

⁵⁷ So says a narrative of the 57th Bn. The 58th says that hot food and rum brought up by the quartermaster, Capt. A. F. Best (E. Camberwell, Vic.), and transport officer, Lt. J. W. Collins (Sydney; died 2 Nov. 1937) reached the companies at 10.30 and had "a wonderful effect." The 59th, which had changed its position, however, could not be reached by its Q.M., Captain W. May (Port Melbourne) until dawn. The 29th at 11 p.m. "had an excellent meal of hot rissoles, potatoes, and coffee." In the 38th Lt. P. J. Telfer (Melbourne), with Sgt. E. S. Beard (Wonthaggi, Vic.) as transport officer, after delivering a warm meal to his battalion found the transport of the 37th still looking for its dump. Its Q.M., Lt. W. H. Wilkinson (Drouin, Vic.) had been killed and its transport officer, Lt. J. H. Chapman (Maffra, Vic.) wounded. Telfer therefore found the 37th's dump and delivered its rations. His routine, which was typical, was to come up every afternoon, make contact with the battalion and locate the dump (which moved every day); come up again at 8 p.m. with a hot evening meal and, usually, ammunition; return to the cooks; come up again with a hot breakfast at 3-4 a.m. From the dump, ammunition was usually carried to the companies by the battalion pioneers, and rations by carrying parties of the companies. Lt. G. T. K. Tench (Adelaide), Q.M. of the 32nd, was mortally wounded while reconnoitring. The chaplain of the 37th, Rev. A. E. Goller (Mia Mia and Birchip, Vic.) was killed while collecting the belongings of men who had been killed.

⁵⁸ The 10th A.I. Bde. obtained from H.Q. 27th Amer. Div. rations for 500 troops.

told divisional headquarters that in such conditions the preparations, involving a march of 12,500 yards, would require seven clear hours.⁵⁹ The two divisions having arranged to attack at 6 a.m., Gellibrand at 10.20 telephoned to Brig.-Genl. Cannan that the 11th Brigade, which was on the spot, must carry out the attack as the 9th could not get there before the start. The 11th had two battalions, 42nd and 43rd, not yet seriously engaged; by an ingenious plan the 9th Brigade would come round to Mala-koff Farm and give two of its battalions (33rd and 35th) to the 11th, presumably in time for the later part of the attack; the 9th Brigade would be given the 41st Battalion, then at Quennemont Farm, and with two battalions, 41st and 34th, would clear the Hindenburg Outpost-Line and ground east of it for 1,000 yards



northwards. North of this the 10th Brigade would do the same up to the Corps boundary. The brigades attacking northwards—14th on Railway Ridge and 11th in Hindenburg Line, would use one battalion at a time. As the 14th seized the le Catelet Line the 15th would extend its garrison up it and would later attack eastwards. Away on the right the 8th Brigade was to conform with the British advances on that flank.

The night's movements were of the utmost difficulty for infantry and tanks, as was the bringing up of ammunition for the artillery.⁶⁰ Of eighteen tanks allotted for the northward attack by the 3rd Division only seven⁶¹ reached the start-line, and they alone launched the assault on time. Although no infantry was assembled, the tanks started at the fall of the

**September 30—
The flank
attack**

⁵⁹ Also his tired troops would have to miss their hot meal.

⁶⁰ At dusk on the 29th the drivers supplying the 7th A.F.A. Bde. south-east of Ronssoy had galloped their limbers straight through splendidly aimed shelling. Before morning the 14th A.F.A. Bde. had to bring up 250 shells for each of its guns, and other brigades had similar tasks.

⁶¹ One of the 16th Tank Bn. and six of the 13th.

barrage, which is described as very weak, "a desultory gun fire." Making northwards, west of the Hindenburg Line, they presently met strong fire from machine-guns and anti-tank rifles at Bony, which their guns returned. After skirting the village all except one came back unharmed and, seeing no sign of their infantry, went to the rear.

Brig.-Genl. Cannan had ordered the attack on his front—that is, the flank from the Tunnel mound to the Hindenburg Line—to be made by the 44th, with the 42nd and 43rd passing through later at successive stages. But the front line troops of the 44th, exhausted after their day-long bomb fight and the wretched night, had not received the order when the barrage began. The 42nd did not receive it till 8 a.m.,⁶² the runners having lost their way in the dark amid the barbed-wire belts. The rear battalion, 43rd, had started from Triangle Trench at 3.30 but in the conditions of that night it was nearly 7 before it reached Top Lane, bombed out the German post there, and joined the 44th in the Hindenburg Line.

Advance over the open at the Hindenburg Line was out of the question in view of the fire from Bony and the flanks, and an attempt of the 44th after the barrage to bomb up the trenches failed,⁶³ a thirty yards' gap (made by the Bellicourt-Bony road passing through the eastern trench) being rendered impassable by a machine-gun in the western trench.⁶⁴

In the attack by the 14th Brigade east of the Tunnel mound the foremost battalion (53rd) not finding its guides⁶⁵ was led by its commander, Col. Cheeseman, straight to the start-line, but was still 500 yards away when the barrage fell. The 55th,⁶⁶ which was to follow and later attack eastwards with the 15th

⁶² At 6 a.m. the barrage fell on its advanced platoon at Top Lane.

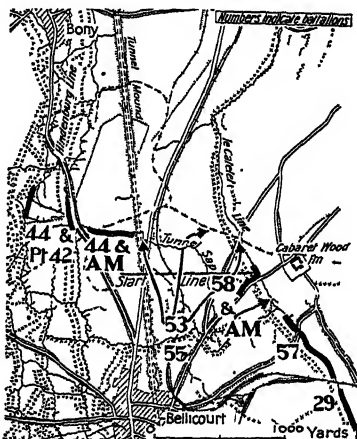
⁶³ In the second trench were Bremner's company, now under Lt. E. G. H. McKenzie (Cottesloe, W.A.) and part of Capt. Lewis's. Hunt's company—now under Lt. W. R. Maddeford (Victoria Park, W.A.)—was in Tunnel Sap. Mitchinson's was in the western trench. Capt. Warry's company (42nd) reinforced Lewis and McKenzie in the eastern trench.

⁶⁴ The attempt was made by Lt. H. Scarr (Kalgoorlie, W.A.).

⁶⁵ The 55th, which was to send them, had none that knew the way. The 53rd had received its order from Br.-Gen. Stewart at 12.30 a.m. but it took time to collect the companies in the rain and dark.

⁶⁶ The 55th (organised in two companies) had earlier been sent to fill a gap between the 3rd and 5th Divs. With 12 pack mules it had struggled through the Hindenburg wire—one mule refused to jump into the trench—when the order was cancelled and the battalion returned. After receiving the new orders Maj. Stutchbury and the intelligence officer led it through a gap in the wire (noted on an air photograph) straight to the assembly point.

Brigade, was already in position. To the infantry it seemed that only a few guns opened fire.⁶⁷ The 53rd, twenty minutes late, deployed at the communication trench north of Bellicourt, but on passing the front line met intense fire especially from the Hindenburg Line, which forced the left to keep east of the Tunnel mound. At the same time Capt. Loughnan (58th Battalion) helped by all Americans and Australians that he could muster, seized the le Catelet Trench opposite Cabaret Wood Farm where a gap had previously existed between 58th and 57th.⁶⁸ Farther north in the le Catelet Trench the right of the 53rd led by Capt. Jhonson⁶⁹ forced the enemy 300 yards northward to a road crossing. Here the Germans stood and counter-attacked. Meanwhile the left companies on and beside the Tunnel mound, receiving fire from Hindenburg Line, le Catelet line, and front, found progress most difficult. The left front company under Capt. Wilson⁷⁰ moved across to the le Catelet Trench. Wilson was killed but this movement took the German attack there in flank. The fighting in the trench was furious, flowing to and fro, Jhonson rallying his men again and again when they despaired of breaking the German resistance, and eventually forcing the enemy farther northwards.



To advance along the mound also seemed vital since the Germans, with dugouts and shafts leading to the Tunnel,

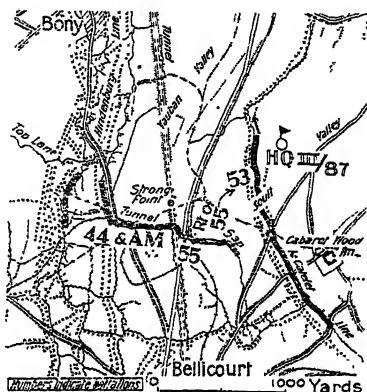
⁶⁷ The slightness of the barrage was no fault of the severely tried artillery brigades (13th and 14th) which only received their orders at 3 and 1 a.m. respectively and had to get many of their guns swung round.

⁶⁸ These Americans were probably part of the II/118th under Lt. Read (killed on Oct. 6). Loughnan afterwards said that the American officers in this attack knew what to do and the men did it "very regularly." Lt. J. H. Green (Coburg, Vic.), 58th Bn., was with them.

⁶⁹ Capt. C. A. Jhonson, M.C.; 53rd Bn. Bank Clerk; of Parramatta, N.S.W.; b. Bathurst, N.S.W., 5 Jan. 1885. Died of wounds, 2 Oct. 1918.

⁷⁰ Capt. W. G. Wilson, M.C.; 53rd Bn. School teacher; of Koo-wee-rup North and Goulburn Weir, Vic.; b. Bailleston, Vic., 19 Sep. 1882. Killed in action, 30 Sep. 1918.

enfiladed from there the opposing front on either side of them. Lieut. Hill ⁷¹ of the support company led a handful of men in a famous fight along the mound to the railway crossing, where he was held up by a strong-point just beyond. He asked help of the 55th behind him but a German counter-attack and intense fire eventually forced all Australians there to move into the le Catelet line.⁷² The right of the 55th⁷³ had managed to reach over the open some old earthworks between the le Catelet line and Tunnel mound, but could get no farther as the ground sloped towards Bony; before noon trench-mortars at the mound drove the 55th too into the le Catelet line. There the gallant Jhonson was mortally wounded, but, largely by Hill's leadership in attack after attack the Germans were driven back another 600 yards. Near an elbow in the trench, in face of fire of all arms the attack stopped. Down Soult Valley on the right a German machine-gun fired. Lieut. Ralph⁷⁴ and a few men worked out thither and, pinning down the Germans by Lewis-gun fire, captured by "peaceful penetration" the headquarters of the III/87th I.R., with its commander, adjutant, and 40 men. On the way back Ralph was mortally wounded.



The fact that the 53rd at this time had pushed beyond the

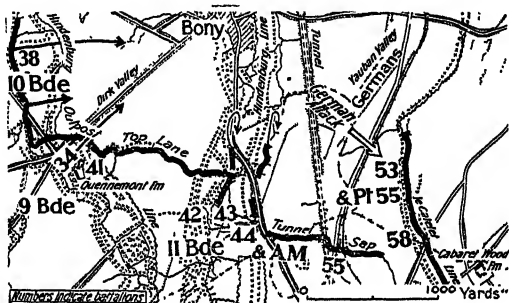
⁷¹ Lt. R. V. Hill, D.S.O.; 53rd Bn. Grocer; of Mooroopna, Vic.; b. Mooroopna, 11 Dec. 1893. Died 15 Aug. 1928.

⁷² Hill's company commander, Lt. A. O. Thompson (Penrith, N.S.W.), had been wounded and Lt. E. Althouse (Woollahra, N.S.W.) killed. On the mound Hill and his six men seized, first a post of 20 Germans with 3 machine-guns; next, a double-entrance dugout with a machine-gun at each entrance. When his call reached the 55th, Capt. R. A. Goldrick (Annandale, N.S.W.) and W. N. Giblett (Thornleigh, N.S.W.) of that battalion were directing their companies to line the west bank of the mound preparatory to the intended advance eastwards. At this stage Germans were reported to be attacking along the mound. Goldrick ordered his men to fall back into Tunnel Sap west of it, then held by Americans. From here Lt. Chadwick and his batman and, independently, Lt. A. R. Jackson (Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.), and Sgt. E. Sullivan (Sydney), crawled out to locate the strong-point, but machine-gun fire immediately west of it killed Jackson and Sullivan, and prevented the attempt.

⁷³ Under Lt. L. C. Wood (Christchurch, N.Z. and Sydney).

⁷⁴ Lt. P. E. Ralph, M.M.; 53rd Bn. Farmer; of Bathurst, N.S.W.; b. Bourke, N.S.W., 1892. Died of wounds, 1 Oct. 1918.

alignment of the 11th Brigade in the Hindenburg Line made the situation very threatening for the Germans there, but also difficult for the 53rd. In the Hindenburg Line, the original plans having broken down, the senior officers on the spot⁷⁵ had to plan their own attack. The 43rd under Capt. Moran having arrived and cleared Top Lane, the companies attacked about 11 a.m. up both trenches and, on the machine-guns in the western trench being suppressed, parties in the eastern trench were able to cross the Bony road. But where the road passed through the western trench⁷⁶ the ground sloped down facing Bony and the advance was stopped.⁷⁷ The Germans later



counter-attacked and drove the troops of all battalions back to where the road crossed the western trench.⁷⁸ The 44th in the eastern trench withdrew to a corresponding position where its men were pinned down by machine-gun fire from Bony and from Vauban Valley, from which field-guns also were sweeping the parapet. There the 11th Brigade remained, though often during the day it was wrongly reported to have reached Bony. The trenches close in rear were so crowded with Australians and Americans that Col. White of the 35th ordered his battalion to be kept back, as were the rear companies of the 42nd.

In the 1e Catelet line also the Germans early in the afternoon counter-attacked up the trench and over the open from

⁷⁵ The senior appears to have been Capt. Moran.

⁷⁶ Capt. Lewis and Lt. McKenzie crossed it and returning dribbled their men over.

⁷⁷ McKenzie and a bombing party went on two hours later. As they descended the trench a German officer stood on the Knoll opposite with one arm raised. When he dropped it machine-guns and trench-mortars opened intense fire. The Australians withdrew to the edge of the slope. Two men of the 43rd crept out and sniped the crew of a trench-mortar that was worrying the troops in Top Lane. The German machine-gun crews at Bony in concrete emplacements were invulnerable to the 9th M.G. Coy.'s guns.

⁷⁸ In the 43rd Lts. M. K. Macdonald (Drummoyn, N.S.W.), R. W. Scott (N. Adelaide) and R. D. Thomson (Mt. Gambier, S.A.) were wounded.

the valley west of it. The Australians were driven back, but a stand by a private of the 55th, John Ryan,⁷⁹ drove off the frontal enemy, and the trench was retaken to a point several hundred yards south of the elbow.⁸⁰ Great help was given by the 119th American Regiment carrying ammunition and bombs.⁸¹ Part of the II/118th also assisted by taking over a captured section of the le Catelet line.

The Hindenburg Outpost-Line was to have been attacked by the 9th and 10th Brigades at 6 a.m. But at dawn the scouts, pushing forward, found the German garrison gone. The Australians occupied the support trench,⁸² along which were many German and American dead and a number of abandoned enemy machine-guns. These brigades were to move eastwards as the 11th progressed northwards in the Hindenburg Line. The advance of the 11th was slight, but the 34th Battalion cleared part of Dirk Valley south-west of Bony. Peters' company of the 38th advanced along Bony Avenue and a patrol reached the slope opposite the village, but had to be withdrawn until nightfall, the machine-gun fire from Bony being severe.

The tactics of German defence on the Western Front were that day changed, a result of the colossal attacks begun by the Allies on September 26. On the 28th Hindenburg informed the commanders of his Army Groups that, in view of these and probable other attacks, the lack of reserves in fighting condition, and the critical railway situation, they must not expect further reinforcements. Therefore, if the front line was lost, the counter-attack divisions need not necessarily retake it, but might make a switch from the withdrawn line to the part of the front still held. If the enemy broke through on a wide front, German commanders were to support chiefly the pivotal points while checking him frontally with weak forces.

Thus on the Australian-American front the enemy had withdrawn to the Hindenburg Line whatever troops he had till then in the Hindenburg Outpost-Line. Farther north he had come back to behind the canal. The flank formed by the 87th I.R., 2nd Guard Divn. and Engineer Companies completed a switch from the 54th and 121st Divns. near Bony to the flank of the 21st south of Cabaret Wood Farm. The

⁷⁹ Pte. J. Ryan, V.C.; 55th Bn. Labourer; of Tumut, N.S.W.; b. Tumut, 1890. Died 3 June 1941.

⁸⁰ The Germans were in the trench north of Ryan and also at a bank in the open south-west of him. Organising the few men near him, he rushed with them the flank of the Germans at the bank, killing several. The rest fled, chased by Lewis-gun fire. For this and other deeds Ryan, who was wounded as he returned, was awarded the Victoria Cross.

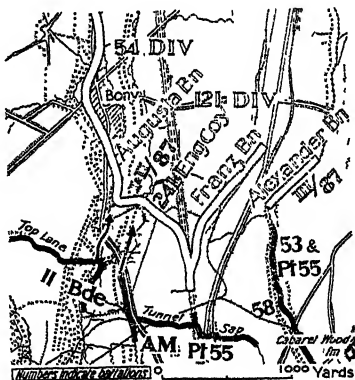
⁸¹ Australian field ambulance bearers—parties of whom were now regularly attached to brigades in action—greatly helped the clearance of wounded.

⁸² The 37th Bn. was put in on the left of the Knoll.

attack at 6 a.m. by the tanks seems to have scared the staffs at Bony. According to the history of the 87th I.R., the Alexander Bn. in the le Catelet line was forced back at 8 a.m. Headquarters of the III/87th, just east of that line, was not informed and its adjutant was about to visit the line when machine-gun bullets from the south skimmed the dug-out entrance (they came, of course, from some of the men under Lt. Ralph). "Other machine-gun parties" were working up from the rear, and when the occupants tried to escape from a more sheltered exit they found "that any step forwards meant certain death." Next came a shout of "Come out!" After destroying his papers Capt. Hoyer, the battalion commander, ordered his headquarters to surrender.⁸³ At 10 a.m., as the Alexander Bn., driven back, was crowding the trench, the III/87th was mustered at its *regimental* headquarters. The 3rd M.G. Coy. (5 guns) and 65th S.S. Detachment connected the position with Cabaret Farm.

Farther west the morning attack drove back the switch line formed by Franz Bn.⁸⁴ and the 241st Engineers; but, bending right back to face south-east, with an advanced battery of the 241st F.A.R. firing direct, they drove the Australians from the open in Vauban Valley. In the Hindenburg Line the I and II/87th held till 1 p.m. At 3.30 the Australian attack in the le Catelet line reached the former site of the 87th regimental headquarters, but parts of III/87th were put in to rally the Alexander Bn. and, with the advanced battery and machine-guns, stopped the Australian advance down Vauban Valley.

The Germans at the northern end of the Tunnel expected that their opponents, having gained possession of the southern end, might try to push through it. A company of the 27th R.I.R. was at the northern entrance on guard. It chanced that this afternoon Lt. Brown,⁸⁵ gas officer of the 8th Australian Bde., whose headquarters were outside the southern end, explored the Tunnel. Passing the concrete barrier at the mouth, and another under Bellicourt, Brown heard machine-gun fire above. Finding an exit he climbed up, to find the passage full of Americans who did not know their shelter led to a tunnel. Their commander sent two officers with Brown to explore farther. After passing a third barrier, north of Bellicourt, they saw the northern opening, like a distant candle-flame. With Brown's torch screened by his hand they went on till this patch of daylight had



⁸³ The history of the 87th tells how the Diggers "went through" the prisoners several times for souvenirs. The Australian officers, who were not impressed by Capt. Hoyer's attitude, did not interfere. The behaviour of the Americans behind the line, however, made a most favourable impression on Hoyer. There can be no doubt that some Diggers risked their nation's reputation for decency through their fondness for souvenirs.

⁸⁴ The history of the 2nd Gd. Gren. says it had heavy losses.

⁸⁵ Lt. L. S. Brown, 32nd Bn. Accountant; of N. Adelaide; b. Prospect, S.A., 3 Oct. 1886.

grown much larger, when it suddenly disappeared. A moment later came a noise and the three were blown over—evidently by the explosion of a mine. Fearing that other mines might be blown in rear of them they ran back.

Whether the Germans at the northern tunnel mouth saw the torch is unknown, but their engineers blew up the northern entrance without warning the German company stationed there, and caused (says the history of the 27th R.I.R.) "painful loss."⁸⁶

The 15th Brigade opposite Cabaret Wood Farm was not to move until a more general advance eastward began, but Lieut. Dalgleish⁸⁷ (58th), though wounded, twice led patrols to test the strength of the garrison of the farm.⁸⁸ At Nauroy the 8th Brigade had been ordered to try to send patrols on to Mill Ridge. The Sugar Factory there had been heavily shelled at intervals during the night by the 13th Brigade A.F.A., but when peaceful penetration was attempted the fire from the Factory and from the Lamp Signal Station farther north stopped every effort.⁸⁹ At 2.40 Capt. Derham commanding the 29th Battalion agreed to attempt the capture of these two "forts" if assisted by a barrage, difficult though the task would be.⁹⁰

At 4 p.m. the barrage fell. Leave had then just been obtained for some heavy artillery to be used,⁹¹ but the barrage of 18- and

⁸⁶ Originally the Tunnel, as soon as captured, was to be mopped up by the American infantry and then explored by the 14th and 9th Field Coys. The northern end, however, was not captured until Oct. 1, and owing to the unexpected course of the attack it was not till the night of Sep. 30 that an order issued to the 14th Field Coy. to explore it from the southern end. The company, which had to arrange for a Lewis gun party to cover it if necessary, began its work during Oct. 1 as did Lts. H. St. A. Murray (Christchurch, N.Z.) and E. A. Robinson (Brisbane, Q'land), 11th Fld. Coy. and some of the 5th Pioneers. They found "no sign of recent habitation." The stairways in the air shafts did not reach the Tunnel and the approaches from other parts of the surface were much shorter than had been shown on the maps. Lt. F. M. Best (Yarra Glen, *via* Morgan, S.A.), 14th Fld. Coy., completed the exploration at 3 p.m. on Oct. 2. The 5th Pioneer Bn. removed a number of mines from the Tunnel.

⁸⁷ Lt. N. Dalgleish, D.S.O.; 58th Bn. Fibrous plasterer; of Newmarket and Ballarat, Vic.; b. Ballarat East, Vic., 25 Mar. 1895. Died of wounds, 9 Oct. 1918.

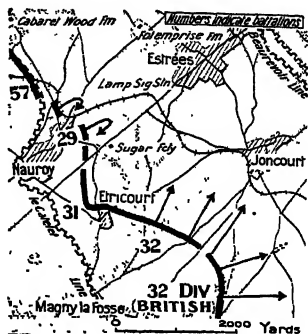
⁸⁸ He then estimated it at 40 Germans with machine-guns.

⁸⁹ Lt. G. S. Dellit (Sydney), of the 31st, whose company had relieved during the night the left of the 32nd, tried to advance across the gully north of Etricourt but had sharp losses. Lt. I. N. Gair (Rockhampton, Q'land) was killed. Two 4.2-inch guns were captured, their crews having fled. In the forward company of the 30th under Capt. W. H. Zander (Mosman, N.S.W.), connecting the 31st and 29th, Lt. H. Doust (Glen Innes, N.S.W.) was killed. Capt. F. A. Wisdom (Glen Innes) the brigade-major, crawled out himself through the 29th but could only get 150 yards.

⁹⁰ Br.-Gen. Elliott (15th Bde.) had ordered up his 59th Bn. to attack through the 29th at 3.30; but, as it discovered that the 29th had been ordered to attack the same objective at 4 p.m., the order was cancelled.

⁹¹ Previously Fourth Army H.Q. had not allowed it; Gen. O'Ryan told Gellibrand that his guns might fire on any target but Gouy.

60-pounders was weak and, on each flank, fell actually behind the 29th. One company managed to gain a little ground, but on the left the fire—in enfilade from Cabaret Wood Farm and frontally from the Lamp Signal Station, both of which overlooked the ground—was terrific. Machine-guns fired from concrete shelters, and field-guns blazed point blank. The right of the 57th trying to swing up was driven back. Capt. Read's company of the 29th had men hit every time it rose, and lost twenty in a few minutes. Read reported that to go on would be suicidal; and his opinion, passed to Brig.-Genl. Tivey, settled the question. Those troops who had advanced were withdrawn. The 31st, which was to attack only if the 29th took the Sugar Factory, did not move.⁹²



On the far right the 32nd Battalion had advanced in the morning towards Joncourt in co-operation with the 32nd British Division. Unsupported by tanks or artillery, and under strong distant machine-gun fire, it gained 1,000 yards and later went on to within a few hundred yards of the village.⁹³ The British could not take Joncourt or Sequehart, but their right captured Levergies and mopped up le Tronquoy; and that evening the XV French Corps began to pass through north of St. Quentin.

The German positions about the Lamp Signal Station were still held by the 81st I.R., and the Sugar Factory and Joncourt by the 80th (21st Divn.). Early that morning the 241st Divn. came in on their left relieving the 2nd. The 80th I.R. is said to have held a front of two kilometres with about 450 men.⁹⁴ As constantly happened at this time its accompanying field battery, stationed close behind it, helped materially to stop the attack.

After dark orders reached the Australian commanders in the line that all American troops not necessary for garrison were to be sent back, and before dawn most Americans were

⁹² Capt. R. C. Aland found the factory held by Germans.

⁹³ The 117th Amer. Inf. sent stretcher-bearers to the 31st.

⁹⁴ It was reinforced at dusk by remnants of the 2nd Div.

withdrawn.⁹⁵ Early in the night Australian quartermasters and transport officers, despite the rain, again brought the hot meals right to the front line.⁹⁶

The objectives set by Rawlinson for this second day's fighting had not been gained by his army except at le Tronquoy. To clear the Hindenburg Line, Monash now proposed that the 9th and 10th Brigades should attack it frontally at dawn under a barrage. Upon Gellibrand's expressing strong preference for the flank attack, this proposal was abandoned and the previous plan was left unchanged except that nearly the whole 5th Division would attack Mill Ridge with a much stronger barrage, and straighten the line from the western edge of Joncourt to the point reached by the 53rd in the le Catelet line. Ten tanks of the 16th Tank Battalion would help, and the two hitherto unused battalions of the 14th Brigade, 54th and 56th,⁹⁷ would be brought round to relieve the 29th Battalion (8th Bde.) in front of Nauroy. The 31st and 32nd would each be strengthened by a company of the 30th (Lieut.-Col. Street). It was intended that after reaching the objective the troops should advance by "exploitation," if possible, to the Beaufort Line. The 2nd Australian Division, already in the rear area, would probably take up the task there, the 3rd and 5th being relieved. The IX Corps also would this day complete the previous day's plan.

The night again was dark and raining. The 54th Battalion received its orders by telephone at 1 a.m., and the 56th (which at dusk had been sent to the Hindenburg Line) at 1.30. The tanks when informed of their task were on their way to help the 10th Brigade in the countermanded attack on Bony. The 58th (15th Bde.) had just time to cancel a projected raid on Cabaret Wood Farm. The rain stopped before dawn and the tanks were in time, but

⁹⁵ At the Knoll and some other parts, owing to the thinness of the line, the Americans were retained till next day.

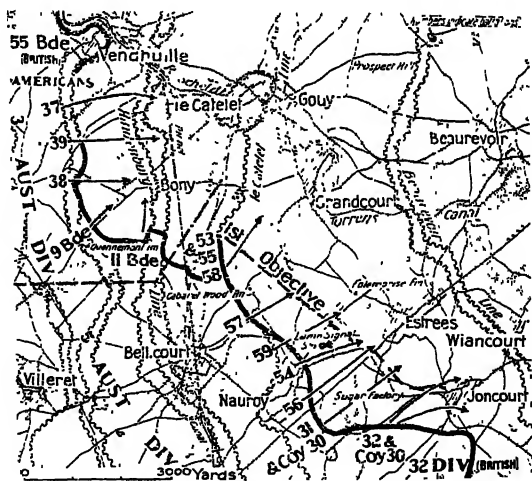
⁹⁶ The 42nd received that day three hot meals, the field kitchens being placed close behind the companies and the transport officer, Lt. H. A. R. Squires (Port Elliott, S.A.) bringing the mules through the wire entanglements. The transport of the 53rd and others brought hot food on half limbers to the front line. An American party made two trips each night from Bellicourt with ammunition.

⁹⁷ Under the scheme for disbanding certain battalions these two were to have been amalgamated as the 56th; each had been organised in two companies.

the head of the 54th Battalion, Capt. Benson's⁹⁸ company, was just arriving at the start-line, and the 56th had not appeared there, when the barrage fell.

It was well laid and fairly dense,⁹⁹ and little resistance was met anywhere. Parties of Germans could be seen fleeing before the troops reached them. Strong-points such as Cabaret Wood Farm, the Lamp Signal Station and Sugar Factory, were found held by only a few men. Others were captured in deep dugouts in the trench-system west of Estrées. Soon after the start the 56th marched up on the right in fours.¹⁰⁰ The objective was easily gained and some battalions at once went on to exploit the success.

The fighting was now well clear of the old battlefield. Grass or self-sown crops covered the slopes; the few small copses, and the hedges and gardens of the villages, were in full leaf. Joncourt, a small village, lay on a green upland; Estrées ("red roofs in back gardens and a fine mass of red brick church rising above them," as an Australian wrote) nestled in a dip leading to the head stream of the Scheldt, which here ran as a storm water channel, partly banked in



stone, and known as the Torrens Canal. Beaurevoir lay scattered and bleak on the bare hilltop beyond. The 32nd sent

⁹⁸ Capt. S. A. Benson, 54th Bn. Clerk; of Strathfield, N.S.W.; b. Neutral Bay, N.S.W., 5 Nov. 1894.

⁹⁹ The rate of fire was very much faster than on Sep. 30.

¹⁰⁰ With the rest of the 54th under Capt. A. P. Vine Hall (N. Sydney, N.S.W.).

patrols into Joncourt¹ and then lined its northern and eastern edges. Patrols found the Beaufort Line, beyond, strongly held. At 9 a.m. the eastern side of Joncourt was handed over to the 15th Lancashire Fusiliers (32nd Divn.). The 56th Battalion faced Estrées, and a tank went into it while the protective barrage was still on it and reported it lightly held. After a conference with Capt. Benson of the 54th, Lieut. Watt (56th), who urged immediate action, went into the village,² returned, brought up his company, and drove out some 30 Germans, who were obviously eager to get away. Benson's company supported his left, but being far ahead of all others these companies were presently withdrawn by their officers to the objective line. About 9 o'clock, on an order from their brigade, they reoccupied the village. The 31st came up on the right to the nearer of the two sunken roads between Estrées and Joncourt.³

The original order to "exploit" had apparently not reached some of the battalions. When the 57th reached its objective south-east of Cabaret Wood Farm Lieut.-Col. Denegy telephoned to his brigadier, General "Pompey" Elliott, that the troops, tired though they were, could have gone much farther. "Damn it! if you can do it, do it now!" was the reply. The 59th and 57th at once sent patrols to the line Folemprie Farm-Bank Copse; Lieut. Dalgleish (58th) had already thrust out to the north. But the Germans, who earlier could be seen withdrawing troops, transport, and guns up the hills beyond the Beaufort Line,⁴ had now settled down, and for some hours the slope north of Estrées was violently bombarded by 5.9- and 8-inch howitzers.

Meanwhile, in reaction to the reports then reaching divisional headquarters, came orders for the 8th and 15th Brigades to seize the Beaufort Line. But if the opportunity to do so had existed, which is doubtful, it had now passed. So severe was the shelling that the Australian posts were withdrawn

¹ Seven Germans and a 4.2-inch gun and team were captured. Maj. Wark himself captured a machine-gun. The 32nd this day got into action two German 4.2-inch guns at Etrécourt.

² With a sniper, Pte. F. Colburn (Bathurst, N.S.W.; died 16 July 1934).

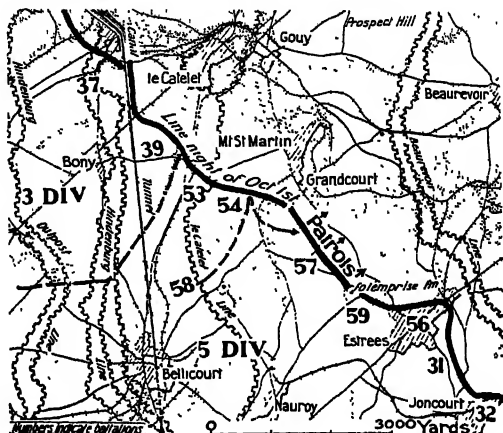
³ Lt. H. D. Skinner (Windsor, Q'land) later found the other road unoccupied.

⁴ German gun-teams retiring were shelled by Pte. H. R. McDonald (Koo-wee-rup East, Vic.) of the 58th with a captured German field-gun.

over the crest and not moved forward again until dusk, when they occupied generally the line of the Estrées-Gouy road.

In the le Catelet line the extreme northern flank of the 5th Division at dawn had found the foreground strangely quiet, as did the 3rd Division in and facing the Hindenburg Line. There a patrol⁵ of the

33rd Battalion at 2 a.m. advancing up to the edge of Bony had met no Germans. At daylight parties of them were seen withdrawing from the village outskirts. By about 9.45 patrols of the 10th and 11th Brigades were in Bony, and those of the 10th soon



reached the Tunnel mouth.⁶ But here, and at the northern ends of Bony and Railway Ridges, overlooking the Scheldt, sharp fire of machine-guns at le Catelet, and of field-guns on Prospect Hill above Gouy, indicated that the enemy was probably holding those villages in force. A flank was accordingly formed across these ridges to the Estrées-Gouy road south of St. Martin.⁷

Hindenburg, who was now also suffering blows by the Canadians at Cambrai, issued another order on the 30th: "The supply of O.H.L. reserves can no longer be reckoned with. Nevertheless an enemy breakthrough must be prevented at all costs. Army groups must be able, when the situation demands, to give ground, inflicting loss and destroying communications, but not breaking contact with the enemy. The next defence line—the Lys-Hermann-Hunding line (through le Cateau)—must be constructed with all possible speed for holding as a permanent

⁵ Under Lt. H. J. Cole (Parramatta, N.S.W.). It worked down the Hargicourt-Bony road. The evening air patrol had reported Germans leaving Bony.

⁶ 40th Bn. patrols had great difficulty in finding gaps in the wire of the Hindenburg Line.

⁷ The 58th Bn. first formed a line on this flank facing north between the le Catelet line and the Estrées road. It was heavily shelled, losing nearly all its officers including the very gallant Dalgleish, who was mortally wounded. Later it was ordered to turn about and then wheel left through 120 degrees, pivoting on its left and bringing its front on to the St. Martin-Estrées road. Its former position was taken over by the 54th.

position." In passing on this order von Boehn said that an early retirement to the Hermann Line might be reckoned with; the date depended on the situation—it might be within a few days.

On the night of September 30th the IV Reserve and 51st Corps were ordered to fall back slightly to the line le Catelet-Gouy-Estrées-Beaurevoir Line-Sequehart. It was against a screen covering this retirement, and against some of the garrison of the new forward zone, that the Australians had thrust on Oct. 1. Gen. von Boehn had now to decide whether he could still stand on this line and its extension through Crèvecœur to Cambrai. As reports from the armies indicated that the offensive was slackening, he directed, for the settlement of all doubt, that the present line must be held. The 54th Divn. (and 87th I.R.) held le Catelet and Gouy; the 2nd Guard Divn. and 119th Divn. the Beaurevoir Line west of Beaurevoir; the 21st Divn. was at and east of Estrées; the 241st (left of Second Army) east of Joncourt, and the 34th (right of Eighteenth Army) about Sequehart. The Germans noted that near le Catelet the Australians followed slowly. A clerk of the 90th R.I.R., who had left a box of papers on Railway Ridge, was able to return and retrieve them.

The 3rd and 5th Divisions had thus completed their modified but exceedingly difficult task of confronting the Beaurevoir Line.⁸ The fighting from September 29th onward had shown

⁸ They were very tired and their casualties (Sep. 28-Oct. 2) were:

| <i>3rd Division</i> | | | | | |
|-------------------------|--------|------|-----------------------|--------|------|
| 9th Brigade | | | 10th Brigade | | |
| | Offrs. | O.R. | | Offrs. | O.R. |
| 33rd Bn. | 7 | 47 | Bde. H.Q. | 2 | 2 |
| 34th Bn. | 4 | 48 | 37th Bn. | 7 | 106 |
| 35th Bn. | 1 | 45 | 38th Bn. | 4 | 100 |
| 9th L.T.M. Bty. . . | — | 1 | 39th Bn. | 1 | 45 |
| | | | 40th Bn. | 5 | 77 |
| | | | 10th L.T.M. Bty. . . | — | 7 |
| | 12 | 141 | | 19 | 337 |
| <i>Divisional Units</i> | | | | | |
| 11th Brigade | | | Divisional Units | | |
| | Offrs. | O.R. | | Offrs. | O.R. |
| 41st Bn. | 9 | 108 | D.H.Q. | — | 1 |
| 42nd Bn. | 4 | 32 | Artillery | 1 | 41 |
| 43rd Bn. | 3 | 46 | Engineers | — | 17 |
| 44th Bn. | 9 | 105 | Signals | — | 3 |
| 11th L.T.M. Bty. . . | — | 6 | 3rd M.G. Bn. | 4 | 71 |
| | | | 3rd Pion. Bn. | 1 | 75 |
| | | | A.A.M.C. | 1 | 23 |
| | 25 | 297 | | 7 | 231 |

Total 3rd Div.—63 officers, 1,006 other ranks.

| <i>5th Division</i> | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------|------|------------------|--------|------|
| 8th Brigade | | | 14th Brigade | | |
| | Offrs. | O.R. | | Offrs. | O.R. |
| 29th Bn. | 1 | 79 | 53rd Bn. | 7 | 99 |
| 30th Bn. | 4 | 82 | 54th Bn. | 5 | 58 |
| 31st Bn. | 5 | 136 | 55th Bn. | 4 | 73 |
| 32nd Bn. | 6 | 120 | 56th Bn. | 5 | 47 |
| 8th L.T.M. Bty. . . | — | 3 | | | |
| | 16 | 420 | | 21 | 277 |

how quickly even the battered German divisions recovered if given a breathing space and cheered by success against less effective troops. Farther south the IX British Corps, for the second time in this offensive, had led the army's advance. The 32nd Division, helped by an artillery barrage and a few tanks, seized the salient of the Beaurevoir Line east of Joncourt and forced its way north to Swiss Cottage.⁹ The Cavalry Corps was summoned up, and at night a handful of IX Corps mounted troops went through. They found strong opposition at Ramicourt; and next morning the Cavalry Corps, then beginning to reach Bellenglise, was ordered back.

Haig's unabated hopes of using the Cavalry Corps may probably be measured by the eagerness—and orders and counter-orders—produced by this climax. IX Corps was to continue to exploit its success towards Fresnoy, Brancourt, and Montbrehain, and the Australians were to probe towards Beaurevoir and the railway between there and Gouy. But should the Germans maintain their present positions the two Corps would attack the Beaurevoir Line on October 3rd on a front of 11,000 yards, break through on that front,¹⁰ and capture the heights beyond including Montbrehain, Ponchaux, and Beaurevoir. The Australian attack would be made by the 2nd Division, which would relieve the 5th facing the Beaurevoir Line. The northern flank of the 5th facing Gouy and le Catelet, and the 3rd near the northern Tunnel mouth, would be relieved by the 50th Division (XIII Corps) which would take over the 3rd Division's

| 5th Division—cont. | | | | | |
|----------------------|--------|------|-----------------------|--------|------|
| 15th Brigade | | | Divisional Units | | |
| | Offrs. | O.R. | | Offrs. | O.R. |
| Bde. H.Q. | 1 | — | Artillery | 3 | 53 |
| 57th Bn. | 8 | 175 | Engineers | — | 18 |
| 58th Bn. | 11 | 117 | Signals | — | 9 |
| 59th Bn. | 12 | 190 | 5th M.G. Bn. | 3 | 64 |
| 15th L.T.M. Bty. . . | — | 7 | 5th Pion. Bn. | 2 | 78 |
| | | | Other Units | — | 23 |
| | — | — | | — | — |
| | 32 | 489 | | 8 | 245 |

Total 5th Div.—77 officers, 1,431 other ranks.

⁹ The division also entered Sequehart but was driven out.

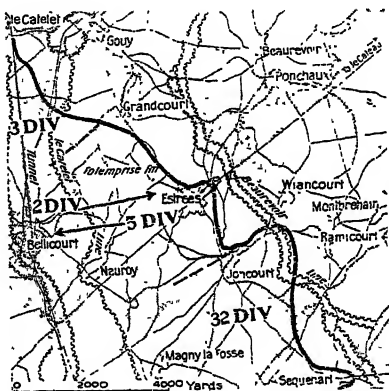
¹⁰ From Sequehart to Guisancourt Farm, of this the section east of Joncourt was already captured.

artillery,¹¹ and would advance northwards taking le Catelet, Gouy and Prospect Hill, and so protect the 2nd Division's flank.

The 5th Australian Brigade (2nd Divn.) took over the part of Monash's front facing the Beaurevoir Line during the cold, clear night of October 1st, and held it during the following day. The projected sortie

October 2

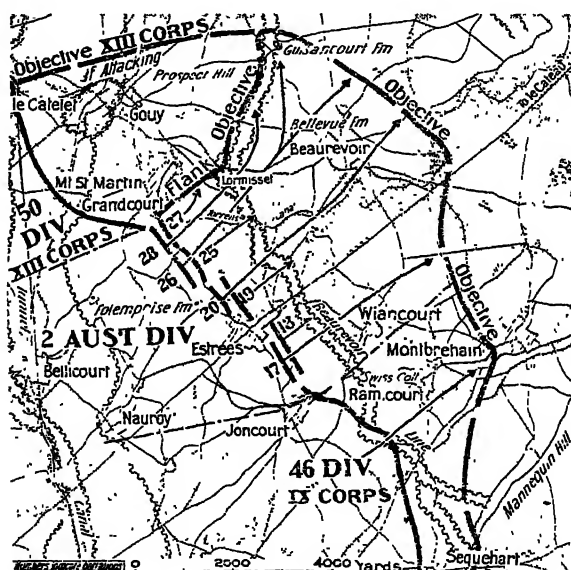
of the cavalry having been countermanded, the 32nd Division attacked under a barrage at 8.30 a.m. on the 2nd. Its left (16th Lincs. Fusilier) after advancing towards Ramicourt, found itself in the air; the 2nd Australian Division, which it expected to co-operate, had not stirred; the 18th Battalion, newly arrived at Estrées, had had no warning of the attack, nor, apparently, was it intended to assist. Like so many other hurried local efforts to exploit a supposed chance of breaking through, the thrust failed despite initial successes both near Ramicourt and at Sequehart. As the Germans had "maintained their present positions" the 46th Division would that night be brought in next to the Australians and, with them on its left and the 32nd Division on its right, would strike on an 11,000 yards' front next morning.



During the intensely dark night of October 2nd, the 7th Australian Infantry Brigade relieved part of the 5th on the northern half of the 2nd Division's front, facing Beaurevoir village. The reserve brigade (6th) came up to the gully in rear of Neuilly; one of its battalions (23rd) lay south of Joncourt as reserve for the 5th Brigade. The attack would be delivered

¹¹ A considerable re-grouping took place. On Oct. 2 the 2nd Div. was supported by its own artillery and that of the 1st Div., two Aust. Army F.A. brigades (6th and 12th) and four British Army R.F.A. brigades (65th, 84th, 108th and 150th). On Oct. 4 the 4th and 5th Divisional Artilleries came in, replacing the four British brigades. The 3rd Div.'s artillery and 3rd A.F.A. Bde. were with III Corps until Oct. 4.

at 6.5 a.m.¹² The 2nd Division, with its 5th and 7th Brigades (that is, with 2,500 rifles in the line) would start from a 5,000 yards' front and seize, first the Beaufevor Line, and, second, Beaufevor village and its heights—a further advance of two miles ending on a front of 6,500 yards. In doing so its left must also capture the Beaufevor Line where this bent back round the knuckle on which lay Lormisset Farm. There the advance would end on the farther height of Prospect Hill-Guisancourt Farm. As it was not known whether the XIII Corps would be able to attack on the left, this trench-line and



also the Scheldt Valley west of it, from Lormisset to Grandcourt, must be occupied as a strongly defended flank. This task added 4,500 yards to the objective, extending it to 11,000 yards. The right brigade, 5th, astride the le Cateau road, would use two battalions (18th and 19th) to capture the Beaufevor Line and two (17th and 20th) to pass through them without pause and capture the final objective. As soon as the Beaufevor Line

¹² That is, 45 minutes before sunrise.

was cleared the 18th and 19th would go on and support the advanced battalions. For the 5th Brigade a barrage laid by five artillery brigades,¹³ with heavies firing at targets beyond, would cover the attack as far as the top of the slope behind the Beaufort Line; from there onwards the guns would fire on selected targets. The left brigade (7th) would attack on a narrower front, one battalion, 25th, seizing the Beaufort Line; a second, 26th, then passing through to capture the final objective between Beaufort and Guisancourt Farm and the Beaufort Line on the flank. The 28th would follow and take over most of this flank. The 27th starting from the left front sector would wheel left and form the part of the western flank, from Grandcourt to Lormisset. The barrage for this brigade also would be laid by five artillery brigades, fire being specially concentrated on the Beaufort Line.¹⁴ The 27th and 28th Battalions would exploit on each side of Prospect Hill and the 26th patrol north-eastwards. The 4th and 5th A.F.A. Brigades would move up after the barrage and give further support to the infantry. Each infantry brigade would be helped by a company of heavy tanks, and eight whippets would assist the 5th to capture Beaufort. Machine-guns and a few trench-mortars went with the attack. As in all this fighting, there was a small proportion of smoke shell in the barrages.

The 7th Brigade's front looked down on the Torrens Canal, which here came in from the east. On the left the Beaufort Line lay on the far slope, enclosing Lormisset Farm, which, like the other homesteads here mentioned, lay enclosed by its big trees. South of this the system crossed to the near slope. In front of or behind it the Torrens would have to be crossed by the 7th and part of the 5th Brigades. Its stream was said to be deep in wet seasons, but early patrols of the 5th Brigade reported the channel now dry.

The early part of the night of October 2nd was wet though it became clear and fine later. The tanks¹⁵ had the utmost difficulty in coming up—the congestion on the roads near

¹³ The 5th A.I. Bde. was supported by the 108th, 65th, 84th and 150th Army Bdes., R.F.A. and the 6th Army Bde. A.F.A., grouped under the O.C. 84th Bde. The 7th Bde. was supported by the 1st and 2nd Aust. Div. Artilleries and the 12th Army Bde. A.F.A., grouped under Lt.-Col. H. W. Lloyd (12th Bde.).

¹⁴ Here the creeping barrage would end about Lormisset.

¹⁵ From the 3rd (whippet), 8th and 13th Tank Bns.

Hargicourt¹⁶ forced the machines to head across country through the Hindenburg Line. Each tugging others out of trouble, they churned out 2,000 yards in 6½ hours; but at 2 a.m., of the eight tanks under Maj. Maurice¹⁷ (13th Bn.), one had broken its track, one had mechanical trouble, five were ditched; and the start-line was 6,000 yards away. North of Nauroy one crew collapsed from petrol fumes. Maurice gave all the crews half an hour's breathing exercises, and at zero hour all the tanks but two were close behind the infantry. The infantry also had great difficulties. Shortly before midnight the Germans began steadily to burst gas shell around Joncourt, Estrées and Folemprie Farm, and in the gullies behind Mill Ridge, mainly occupied by the 5th Brigade and the artillery. Amid this shelling the attack orders and a hot meal had to be issued, and the 17th and 18th Battalions at Joncourt must be collected and moved to the starting tape laid by the engineers. Most of the 20th was kept in the front line to escape the bombardment—Lieut. McGill¹⁸ brought up hot stew and tea for that battalion on pack horses. The barrage orders only arrived shortly before zero and Lieut.-Col. Sadler (17th) and his staff had to stumble through the dark with them on a task that simply could not be done in time without taking risks from gas—Lieut. Haigh,¹⁹ his adjutant, died through this sacrifice. In rear the batteries, which had advanced, were similarly shelled and the orders reached some of them barely in time.²⁰

¹⁶ The bringing up of ammunition during all these nights was a heavy task. The "Black" road, a country track from Villeret, was now marked chiefly by overturned waggons and dead animals, like the roads of 1917 at Ypres. On the best road—that through Hargicourt and Bellicourt, largely planked by the Germans—the nightly blocks resembled those of the Somme winter. "The one thing that saved the situation," wrote an Australian describing the night of Oct. 1, "was the orderliness of the drivers themselves. Had half a dozen men attempted to work a point for themselves by double banking, the traffic would never have got out."

¹⁷ Maj. R. Fitz G. Maurice, M.C.; 13th Tank Bn. Mining engineer; of Bournemouth, Eng.; b. Halifax, Canada, 28 Feb. 1877.

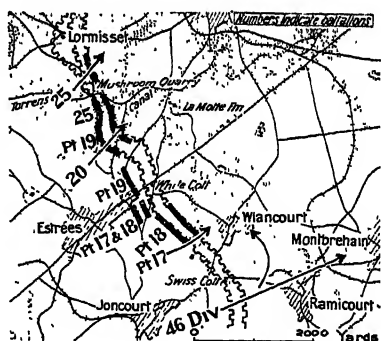
¹⁸ Lt. T. McGill, 20th Bn. Carrying contractor; of Lewisham, N.S.W.; b. Lewisham, 9 May 1893.

¹⁹ Lt. W. R. Haigh, M.C.; 17th Bn. Shire clerk; of Granville, N.S.W.; b. Matata, N.Z., 29 July 1889. Died from effects of gas, 26 Nov. 1918.

²⁰ The 14th and 15th Bties. could not be found in the dark though searches were made for them. Finally two messengers, Gnrs. F. Banner (Sydney) and R. T. Williams (Dulwich Hill, N.S.W.) reached them in time. In the 6th Bty. Lt. S. P. Boulton (Gladesville, N.S.W.) was mortally wounded by a gas shell, and Maj. Dodd and Lt. W. T. Watson (Newtown, N.S.W. and Nelson, N.Z.) were gassed while attending to him. The day was a heavy one for the artillery. In the 5th Bty. the medical officer of the 2nd A.F.A. Bde., Capt. H. E. Kirkland (Lithgow, N.S.W.), Capt. N. S. Hollis (Newtown, N.S.W.) and Lt. H. J. Fisher (Sydney) all lost their lives through one German shellburst.

The barrage fell at 6.5 a.m.,²¹ dense and generally well laid except on the left flank where shells throughout burst short. The 18th and 19th Battalions at Estrées advanced from the sunken roads 650-1,000 yards from the Beurevoir Line. A few German outposts there resisted, especially a body of troops firing from niches in the top of a road bank north of the village. Lewis guns held these down until the 19th and 20th were past their flanks, when the Germans surrendered. They were found to be armed with automatic Mauser pistols.²² The wire of the Beurevoir Line just ahead of this was very thick, and the troops there were stopped by a machine-gun beyond. Just then a tank, the "Mionney," came down the hill from Folemprise Farm. A corporal of the 20th, F. C. Frost, made his way across the wire and shot the machine-gunnery. "Mionney" made a pathway through the wire and the troops went through.²³

On the right the southern companies of the 18th, with the right of the 17th following, also went through the wire, a tank catching up with them there. But the inner companies of the brigade, after passing Estrées, were fired into from the rear by machine-guns in the last houses. The attack was stopped but Capt. Baker,²⁴ leading up his section of tanks, saw the incident and sent a tank which suppressed the guns. The barrage had now passed the Beurevoir Line. and when the tanks moved beyond the village both they and the



²¹ It lay for 6 minutes on a start-line 400 yards short of the Beurevoir Line and then advanced at the rate of 100 yards in 4 minutes.

²² Said to be fitted with drums holding 35 cartridges. This is the first record of a unit employing "Tommy Guns" against Australians. The guns were described as veritable "bullet-squirts." The Germans had for some time been issuing them to storm detachments, who were being trained to a special technique. Somewhat similar pistols firing 14 rounds had been found on individuals in previous battles.

²³ Lt. R. H. Childs, 13th Bn., Tank Corps, did fine service here.

²⁴ Capt. W. E. Baker, M.C.; 5th Bn., Royal Lancaster Regt. and 13th Bn. Tank Corps.

infantry were fired on by a field-gun from the window of a cottage (known as White Cottage) on the le Cateau road between the two trenches, as well as by several anti-tank rifles and some twenty machine-guns, mostly at concrete pill-boxes along the trench. South of this obstacle Lieut. Maxwell (18th), by going through the wire and killing or capturing a machine-gun crew, let his company through. But the left platoons of the 18th, the two right companies of 19th, and, in rear, most of the 17th, lay pinned close in front of the wire.

The parts of the 18th and 19th²⁵ that reached the Beaurvoir Line on either side of this hold up at the road, found that, though the wire was very strong, the trench had been completed only in the sector astride the road. Elsewhere, except for short lengths beside the pill-boxes, most of both lines had merely been spittocked a foot deep. These parts of the 18th and 19th now tried to bomb out the Germans from between them. The southern party under Lieuts. Maxwell and Dryden²⁶ (18th) made headway but was presently stopped.

The barrage covering the 7th Brigade's front was good, but the 25th Battalion had to advance 1,200 yards down and up open slopes before reaching the Beaurvoir Line, which in that sector was well dug with two, and in some parts three, successive trenches. These were densely wired, especially around "Mushroom Quarry" just north of the Torrens, and there were pill-boxes along and between the trenches; the sector was afterwards found to contain over fifty machine-guns. Lewis gunners suppressed much of the enemy's fire, and two tanks arrived in time to crush paths through the entanglement. By then the 26th, from the rear, was fighting beside the 25th. On the right at Mushroom Quarry a machine-gun, which had fired on the battalions descending the slope, was suppressed by Lewis guns while two or three men worked round from the south and then bombed the quarry and the sunken road north of it. Here a regimental and a battalion commander were captured. On the other flank a sergeant of

²⁵ The left company lost every officer and every sergeant: Capt. Sell and Lt. J. T. Hampson ((Hawksburn, Vic.) were mortally wounded; Sell had been gassed the night before, and pneumonia followed his wounding.

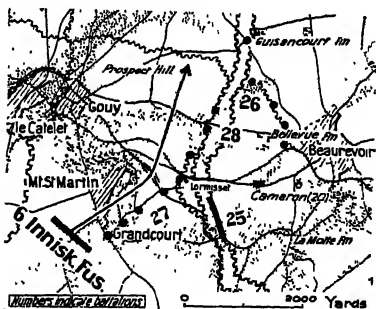
²⁶ Lt. R. E. Dryden, M.C., D.C.M.; 18th Bn. Bank clerk; of Manly, N.S.W.; b. Goulburn, N.S.W., 7 Dec. 1889.

the 25th, J. Seivewright,²⁷ crawled under the wire and attacked from the top of the trench a German post; 52 men with 7 guns surrendered to him. As Col. Davis said afterwards:

These Germans must have had so many defeats that, as soon as our line started, they must have given up in spirit. Otherwise the attack was impossible.

A captured German officer, however, gave him another reason: "You Australians are all bluff. You attack with practically no men and are on top of us before we know where we are."

Except near the Roman road the battalions in second line passed through to take the second objective. The right had been delayed by the opposition east of Estrées, and some companies of the 46th Division, which had driven past Wiancourt on the south, attacked and cleared that village from the German rear.²⁸ The right of the 17th under Capt. Mackenzie pushed through it, and with one tank reached the slope above which lay the objective. Here the tank was hit by a battery farther along the objective ridge, and the party dug in, the right of the 18th under Capt. Paine²⁹ coming up in support. North of the hold-up the 20th crossed the Torrens and made up Kukri Valley towards Beaurevoir.³⁰ Above the left of this valley stood Bellevue Farm, above the right the Mill, two outliers of the village. The farm, though the 20th did not know it, was taken by the 26th, who found there only eight Germans waiting to be captured.³¹ But the point-blank fire from a field-gun and machine-guns at the Mill,



²⁷ Sgt. J. Seivewright, D.C.M. (No. 500; 25th Bn.). Labourer; of Mackay, Q'land; b. Turriff, Scotland, 1 Mar. 1890.

²⁸ This was done by the 8th Sherwood Foresters. The 17th Aust. Bn. was apparently unaware of it, but German records confirm it.

²⁹ Capt. A. Paine, 18th Bn. Sawmiller; of Auburn and N. Coast, N.S.W.; b. Bathurst, N.S.W., 31 May 1874.

³⁰ Lt. Cameron was to go left, Lt. Bain right, and the support company under Lt. Holmes through the village.

³¹ Outside were two machine-guns and two field-guns abandoned.

and from two field-guns behind it, prevented most of the 20th from reaching the crest.³² The companies were mixed, but the most advanced group—Lieuts. Cameron, Bain,³³ Anthon, Shepherd,³⁴ Elkington,³⁵ an artillery officer and ten men—held on in a sunken road on the valley side and silenced the fire from the Mill by means of two captured machine-guns.³⁶ Meanwhile the left of the 26th after climbing over the wire of the Beauvevoir Line had rushed, while the barrage was still on them, three pill-boxes³⁷ at Lormisset Farm, and continued up the trench from blockhouse to blockhouse. Round most of these the trenches had been dug for a short distance, and the posts held ten or twelve men; but the slope was dotted with fleeing Germans, and those who remained were captured by the 26th and 28th. Capt. Stapleton established a post in the trench west of Guisancourt Farm³⁸ while others took position in the long sap north-west of Beauvevoir. The 28th came up after subduing several German posts on the way, and duly occupied its sector. The 27th had swung up across the Scheldt valley, a tank cruising among German machine-guns hidden in the trees ahead and keeping them quiet till the battalion was on its objective.

Here the Australians received a surprise. Col. Davis was watching the advance when a platoon of British troops bore down on him from this flank. They had lost direction but they were part of the 50th Division which, in extreme haste, was not merely sending out patrols but attacking on the Australian flank. Some of the 25th and of Pellew's³⁹ company (27th) from Lormisset caught in flank a line of Germans

³² Lt. Elkington went to its edge and captured a number of Germans sitting in small pits covered with groundsheets, four men with a machine-gun in each pit.

³³ Lt.-Col. W. G. L. Bain, V.D.; 20th Bn. Clerk; of Sydney; b. Sydney, 16 Mar. 1894.

³⁴ Lt. O. M. Shepherd, 20th Bn. Hospital assistant; of Kenmore, N.S.W.; b. Marulan, N.S.W., 6 Dec. 1895.

³⁵ Lt. W. H. Elkington, M.C.; 20th Bn. Grocer; of Armidale, N.S.W.; b. Millthorpe, N.S.W., 19 July 1892.

³⁶ Every man in the 20th was supposed to understand the working of these. The battalion carried two with which to train them. A machine-gun of the 7th M.G. Coy. also was firing at the Mill.

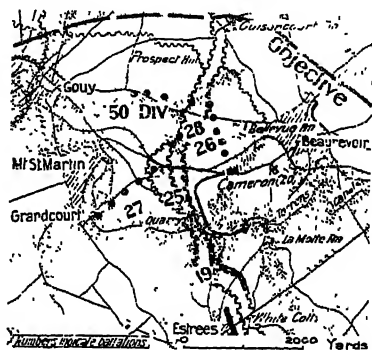
³⁷ Sgt. G. Miller rushed one machine-gun. Lt. E. A. Carter was killed here; also Lt. T. B. Keillor, the fine intelligence officer of the 28th. The 26th this day was commanded by Capt. Cooper, Lt.-Col. Robinson having been hit before the start. (Miller, who died on 25 July 1939, belonged to Helensburgh, N.S.W. and Bluff, Q'land; Carter to Taringa, Q'land, and Keillor to Wickepin, W.A.).

³⁸ Two men visited the farm for souvenirs and reported it empty.

³⁹ Maj. C. E. Pellew, 27th Bn. University student; of Adelaide; b. Adelaide, 21 Sep. 1892. (Member of A.I.F. cricket team.)

firing at the British from a sunken road and captured them as the British arrived. Farther north the 26th saw the 6th Inniskilling Fusiliers capture Prospect Hill and the trench north of it in grand style,⁴⁰ and got touch with them there.⁴¹

So widely extended were the troops that few parties this day knew what others were doing. But fire reaching parts of the 19th⁴² and 20th from la Motte Farm on the le Cateau road and even from the rear showed them that something was wrong in the centre. The 26th had seen nothing of the 20th though their flanks were not far apart. Germans were now seen dribbling forward from Beaurevoir, which had clearly not been taken, and numbers were in the sunken road facing the long sap north-east of the village. Field-guns from north of Beaurevoir fired over open sights. The right of the 26th was forced back, first to Bellevue Farm and later behind it, and the left to behind Prospect Hill. The 28th tried to send two patrols on to that hill, but the Germans reoccupied it⁴³ and Bellevue Farm, and began to trouble Cameron in Kukri Valley. Just then a tank came from the north-west of Beaurevoir, shelled a machine-gun at Bellevue Farm, and crawled down the valley. It was the "Mudhook" under Lieut. Martin.⁴⁴ As the machine-gun at the farm still fired,⁴⁵ Cameron, waving a helmet on a rifle—the regular sign—called up the tank and, after a conference over Martin's map, asked him to shell the place again.



Left flank after withdrawal.

⁴⁰ They were under a sergeant-major and "dressing by the right," said Stapleton afterwards.

⁴¹ A patrol of the 28th went round the summit of Prospect Hill and brought back with it a British N.C.O. in order to show to him the 28th's nearest post which, with two machine-guns of the 7th Company, lay slightly behind the eastern end of the crest.

⁴² Part of the 19th had come on, and also the 20th's right.

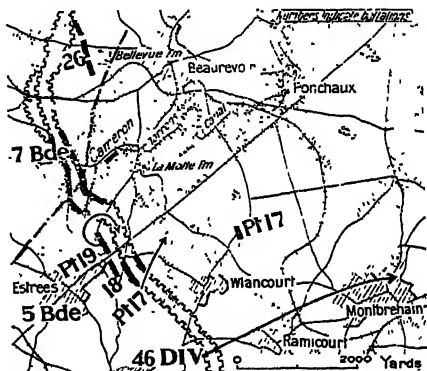
⁴³ Apparently the British on its northern side were cut off. The foot of the southern side was held by them.

⁴⁴ Lt. R. T. Martin, M.C., 13th Tank Bn.

⁴⁵ From an open window. Stokes mortars might have silenced it. Lt. H. R. Bruford (Melbourne) was killed near the farm in the afternoon.

This Martin did till both his guns jammed, and then, with the German anti-tank guns shelling him all the way, withdrew to Mushroom Quarry. Cameron and his party decided to go round by the Beurevoir Line and up the Torrens, clear la Motte Farm, and thence attack Beurevoir from the south. The artillery officer went back to arrange for a barrage to cover the attack.

Meanwhile, on first news that the 20th was through the Beurevoir Line, the whippets had been summoned up to help it take Beurevoir.⁴⁶ As they emerged from Estrées one after another was hit by the gun in the White Cottage till they lay littered in front of it. Finally at 9.40 a.m. Brig.-Genl. Martin⁴⁷ decided to withdraw the companies lying in front of the wire, shell intensely for five minutes the Beurevoir system astride the road, and then use the withdrawn companies of the 19th to bomb down the Beurevoir Line from the northern flank. This was done.⁴⁸ The attack was not resisted, and 200 Germans and 18 machine-guns were captured. The left of the 17th, which had lost heavily,⁴⁹ now pushed on south of the Roman road under Capt. Wright till held up by fire from la Motte Farm, and Lieut.

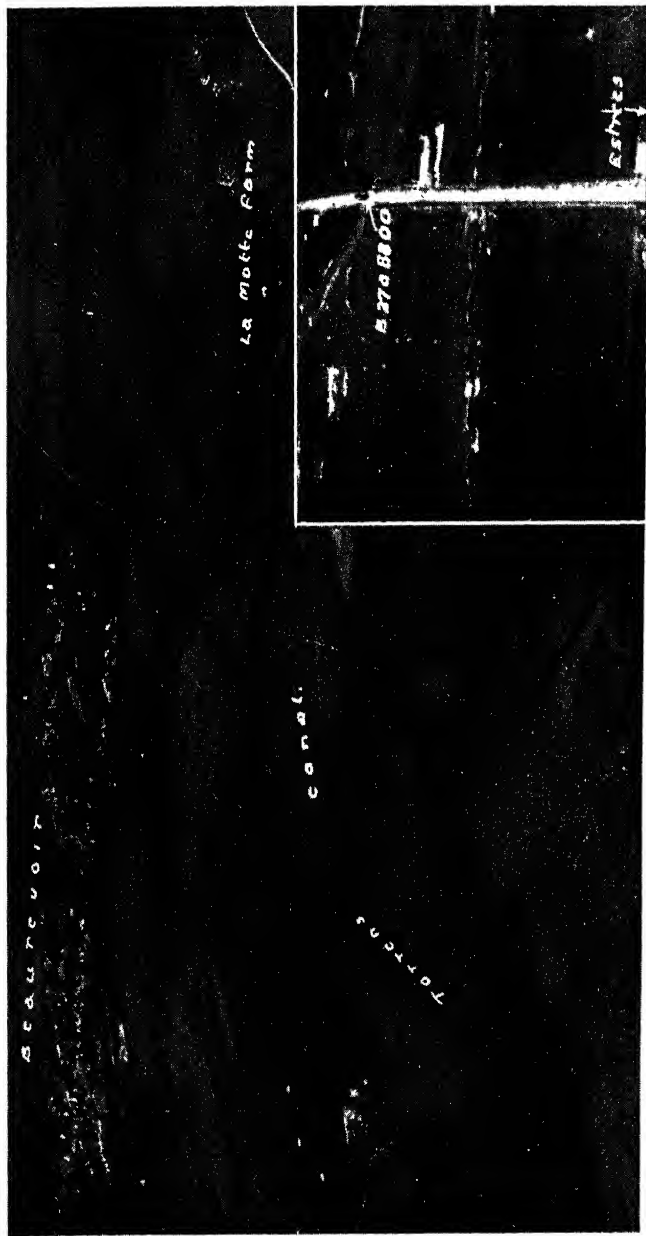


⁴⁶ Col. Forbes (20th), hearing of the German stand east of Estrées, urged that they be stopped but this was not done.

⁴⁷ Br.-Gen. E. F. Martin, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D., commanded 5th Bde., 1918-19. Accountant; of Centennial Park, N.S.W.; b. Launceston, Tas., 22 Aug. 1875.

⁴⁸ There was not time to warn the 18th of the bombardment, and a remarkable incident occurred. Lt. "Joe" Maxwell of the 18th this day commanded one of the companies that had seized part of the Beurevoir Line and tried from the south to bomb out the enemy. He had taken some prisoners, and one, a sergeant-major who spoke English, told him that the Germans in the next post were anxious to be captured but afraid to give themselves up. Accordingly, with two men, Maxwell went over to them, only to find himself surrounded by about twenty men under an officer who at once closed round the Australians and seized the weapons from their hands. Presently the first shells of the new bombardment fell in the trench. Maxwell carried hidden in his respirator a revolver. In the confusion he drew it, shot two of the enemy, and escaped. His leadership throughout this fight, as in many others, was outstanding; it won him the Victoria Cross.

⁴⁹ The centre company was almost annihilated; Capt. Ronald and Lts. Pettit and T. L. Adam (Kensington, N.S.W.) had been wounded.



55. BEUREVOIR, MUSHROOM QUARRY AND LAMOTTE FARM

56. Inset: The white cottage on the le Cateau road.

Photo. taken by No. 3 Sqn., A.F.C. on 1st Oct., 1918.

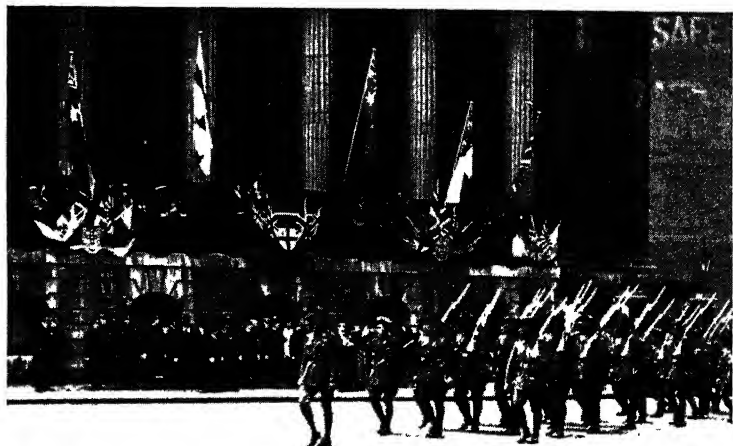
To face p. 1024.



57. AUSTRALIANS AND AMERICANS IN PÉRONNE

The 3rd Division after the Battle of the Hindenburg Line, passing men of the II American Corps who are about to enter the line again.

*Aust War Memorial Official Photo No E3501.
Taken on 4th October, 1918.*



58. THE A.I.F. MARCHES THROUGH LONDON, ANZAC DAY, 1919

The Lord Mayor at the Mansion House takes the salute.

Aust. War Memorial Official Photo. No. D552.

To face p. 1025.

Maxwell (18th) moved up in support. Meanwhile north of the road Lieut. Cameron's party of the 20th came round, picking up other groups on its way, and worked up the Torrens to near the knuckle on which lay la Motte Farm. The farm seemed to be strongly held, and as German machine-guns were firing from a hedge-lined bank on the hill behind it, and reinforcements coming along the le Cateau road, Cameron decided to hold on in the Torrens, facing front and rear. From Mushroom Quarry came a tank, and almost reached them when its track was broken by a shell, which also killed the driver. The crew emerged—it was Martin again, with his "Mudhook." Australians had pointed out to him la Motte Farm, and he had decided "to have a shot at it." In a first attempt his guns had jammed and his crew became faint with the fumes of the exhaust; so he had gone back, asked for two Australians to work his guns, and with them and his driver came on again.

It was then about noon and Cameron went back to report to his colonel. General Rosenthal (2nd Divn.) already knew fairly well the position of his front. The Germans held Prospect Hill on his left and he believed that they held Montbrehain on his right—though actually it had been temporarily seized by the 46th Division.⁵⁰ Rosenthal therefore decided to be satisfied with securing a foothold on the heights just short of Beaurevoir, and Monash agreed to this. The 7th Brigade was already on the line now aimed at. At 12.10 the 5th was directed to secure this line in its sector using the 23rd, 22nd and 24th Battalions of the 6th Brigade. A creeping barrage would be fired at 4.15 p.m. The 23rd had already been sent to the Beaurevoir Line near Wiancourt; but it was 3 p.m. before the 22nd and 24th were ordered from Nauroy.⁵¹

Unaware of these arrangements the intelligence officer of the 20th, Lieut. Burdus,⁵² had found its advanced party in the Torrens. With Lieut. Anthon and some others he "went to have a look at" la Motte Farm. Most of the Germans had fled, and the party cleared the rest, capturing two machine-guns. The area was already much quieter. Cameron had asked

⁵⁰ The 46th captured 1,000 prisoners, and sent back 74 villagers.

⁵¹ The 2nd Pioneer Bn. replaced them there as divisional reserve.

⁵² Lt. S. G. Burdus, D.S.O.; 20th Bn. Locomotive cleaner; of Parramatta, N.S.W.; b. Parramatta, 1891.

Col. Forbes that the Mill and the hedge above la Motte should be shelled. This was done by the 150th R.F.A. Brigade and the 11th and 13th Batteries A.F.A.⁵³ As Germans appeared thronging into Beaurevoir and the Torrens valley south-east of it these also were bombarded. The 20th now stationed three posts beyond la Motte Farm and astride the Torrens.⁵⁴

The plans for the attack at 4.15 had been hurriedly telephoned to the commanders of the 23rd, 22nd and 24th, but it was then obvious that they could not be up in time. About 4.30, on reaching the sunken roads and trenches beyond Estrées, the troops noticed a bombardment in progress far ahead—it was the barrage to cover their attack. Cols. James and Wiltshire going back to headquarters of the 19th arranged with Brig.-Genl. Martin to start at 6.30, and hurried forward again just in time. "Attack in seven minutes," said Wiltshire to Lieuts. Sutherland⁵⁵ and Anderson. The 22nd had already advanced when the right of the 24th reached la Motte Farm. "See that windmill?" said Capt. Pollington to the left company. "That's your objective!" Hardly a shot was fired; the only opposition, near the Torrens, was cleared by Capt. Mahony's company firing Lewis guns from the hip. The Germans ran to the la Motte Farm-Beaurevoir road where fifteen were captured. Night was falling, and the enemy generally did not grasp what was happening.⁵⁶

Resistance throughout was strongest at the Roman road.

⁵³ Lts. C. F. K. Ekensteen (Matrigong Station, Corfield, Q'land) and J. R. Marriott (Perth, W.A.) 4th A.F.A. Bde. directed some of the batteries by observation. The 13th sent two guns forward. The 7th Bde.'s snipers were also exceedingly effective in driving Germans from advanced field-guns and other positions. They claimed 146 hits.

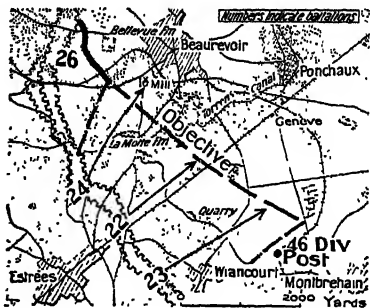
⁵⁴ The casualties of the 5th and 7th Bdes., Oct. 1-3, were:

| <i>5th Brigade</i> | | | <i>7th Brigade</i> | | |
|--------------------|--------|------|--------------------|--------|------|
| | Offrs. | O.R. | | Offrs. | O.R. |
| 17th Bn. | 8 | 216 | 25th Bn. | 1 | 94 |
| 18th Bn. | 5 | 117 | 26th Bn. | 9 | 110 |
| 19th Bn. | 10 | 115 | 27th Bn. | 1 | 63 |
| 20th Bn. | 3 | 127 | 28th Bn. | 7 | 76 |
| | | | 7th M.G. Coy. . . | 1 | 22 |
| | | | Bde. Snipers . . . | — | 4 |
| | 26 | 575 | | 19 | 369 |

⁵⁵ Capt. K. Sutherland, M.C.; 22nd Bn. University student; of Camberwell, Vic.; b. Camberwell, 9 Dec. 1896.

⁵⁶ Farther up this road torches flashed and a German repaired his machine-gun by candle light till fired on. Another walked down and was captured. After the Mill was passed a shot was fired from it and eight Germans and two machine-guns were then found there.

The 22nd Battalion here was warned by men of the 5th Brigade—"Mind the quarry!"—and the battalion had to fight all the way. In this quarry south of the road several Germans including a captain were bayoneted. Rushing a centre of resistance on the left Capt. Braithwaite among others was killed, and, at a copse on the crest, Lieut. Paterson.⁵⁷ Going round the front Lieut.-Col. Wiltshire found a gap in his line in which was a body of Germans apparently unaware of the situation. "It's all right," said his men. "They'll know we're here in the morning." The advance was timely—the 17th in the existing posts were at the end of their tether after the gassing of the previous night, man after man going to the rear half blinded, with streaming eyes and swollen throat.⁵⁸ But the 23rd had no difficulty in pushing on except on the right, where it could not find the 46th Division. The 46th had been driven out of Montbrehain after mid-day; its flank was eventually found at a bend of the railway 1,200 yards north of Ramicourt.⁵⁹



The German front in this day's attack had been held, in the north, by the tired 8th and 54th Divns. (IV Res. Corps) facing south at le Catelet and Gouy. The 21st Reserve had relieved the 121st. Its 88th R.I.R. at Prospect Hill had appealed at 9 a.m. for help to the 87th I.R. (now acting as reserve to the 21st Res. Divn.). The counter-attack was delivered by many scattered elements and probably at different times.⁶⁰

The troops who fled from near Lormisset were the 119th Divn. (51st Corps) previously battered on Sep. 18; and those who held at the White Cottage were the 81st I.R. (21st Divn.), last struck by the

⁵⁷ Lt. E. E. Paterson, M.C.; 22nd Bn. Commercial traveller; of Thornbury, Vic.; b. South Yarra, Vic., 7 July 1881. Killed in action, 3 Oct. 1918.

⁵⁸ The whole battalion staff was out of action. Capt. Wright was called to the rear to replace Lt.-Col. Sadler.

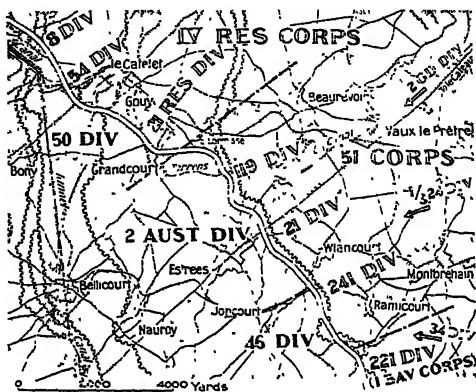
⁵⁹ The troops there warned the 23rd that they were withdrawing farther.

⁶⁰ The history of the 27th R.I.R. says that it was ordered at 8.30 to counter-attack, and that it drove from the hill British troops newly arrived from Palestine. The 87th says that it counter-attacked with other elements at 1 p.m. The 60th I.R. says that it gave a company to the 87th R.I.R. and thus helped in retaking Bellevue Farm. Another account says that the Farm was retaken by the 1/84th.

5th Bde. at Cléry.⁶¹ The 80th I.R. was near Estrées and at Wiancourt; the 241st Divn. at Ramicourt; south of this the 34th (I Bav. Corps). The 80th I.R. was broken through, but was rallied at its headquarters south of the Roman road by Major Weydt. Here were two machine-guns and the 50th Infantry Battery, which with its last five shots hit one tank, stopped another, and caused the infantry (clearly the 17th Bn.) to turn back. An anti-tank battery north of Weydt also had shot away its ammunition, and he retired eventually to Vaux le Prêtre.

The thrust of the 46th Brit. Divn. into Montbrehain drove part of the 241st Divn. northwards on to the same line of heights to which the 81st I.R. was driven from the west. The 51st Army Corps realised that here was the deepest thrust, but about 10 a.m. Beaurevoir also was reported to be lost. Second Army had directed that, at worst, Montbrehain and the "artillery protection line" (west and south-west of Beaurevoir) must be held, but as these were reported to have been taken the 51st Corps now had to name a position farther back. The 2nd Guard Divn.—reduced to 400 rifles, and relieved only thirty-six hours before—was ordered up and was at first directed to bar the Roman road till Montbrehain was retaken. Other reserves—two battalions of the 241st (Saxon) Divn., one of the 119th, and a regiment hurriedly formed under Maj. Köhler from three battalions (I/133rd, I/139th and I/179th) of the arriving 24th (Saxon) Divn.—rushed up between Montbrehain and the Roman road. Corps and Army issued their orders by telephone—all divisions were to counter-attack, each on its own responsibility, none to wait for the troops next to it.⁶²

The 34th Divn. from St. Quentin was that morning coming in to relieve the 221st (the right of the Eighteenth Army) at Sequehart. Its 145th I.R. was now ordered to retake Sequehart, and its 30th I.R. was lent to the 241st Divn. to pinch out the British at Montbrehain from the south while the Köhler regiment did so from the north. The 30th carried out its task with little loss until its left came in range of British machine-guns at Ramicourt. An attack made later by a British tank caused that flank to retire. Meanwhile elements of the 241st Divn. and part of Köhler's regiment thrust at Montbrehain from north and east, and by 2.50 p.m. the morning's line there had been regained.



German line before the attack.

⁶¹ The 87th I.R. (21st Div.), lately attached to the 121st Div., was this day lent as reserve to the 21st Res. Div. whose own reserve (87th R.I.R.) was thrown in.

⁶² A projected withdrawal of the 8th Div. to Villers-Outreaux was countermanded.

The 2nd Guard Divn. took position astride the Roman road during the afternoon. Probably these were the troops whom Cameron saw coming down it. They were ordered to go on with the 21st Divn. and Köhler's regiment, and retake the Beaurevoir Line and Wiancourt. But the Augusta Regt. north of the road (presumably the troops seen at the hedge and bank) was heavily shelled. Parts of the 21st Divn. had advanced again to the copse south of the road and a reconnoitring officer of the Guards had only just found them when, at dusk, the 6th Aust Bde. attacked. It was the Guards that opposed the 22nd, a stubborn party holding out for a time at headquarters of the Alexander Bn. That night the German line was re-established, generally along the railway between Montbrehain and Genève. In the evening the leading regiment of the 20th Divn., which had barely been relieved at Cambrai and was hurried forward in motor lorries, arrived in support.

The Beaurevoir Line had now been seized, by IX Corps, on a 5,000 yards' front, from Sequehart to Joncourt, and by

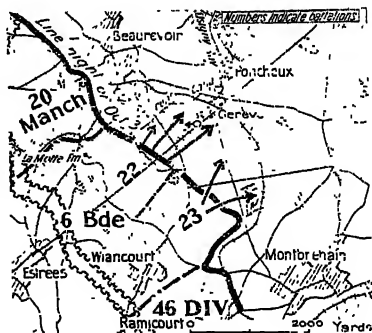
October 3-4 Australian Corps for 6,000 yards up to the south of Prospect Hill; but most of the undulations beyond were in German hands. Haig was straining to put his cavalry through as soon as Beaurevoir and Montbrehain were captured. At noon on the 3rd, believing that the 2nd Australian Division was now, through losses, too weak to capture Beaurevoir, but that Montbrehain had been secured by the 46th, Rawlinson arranged with Monash that after dark the 7th British Brigade of the then-approaching 25th Division should take over the line near Beaurevoir and attack at dawn, the 2nd Australian Division side-slipping slightly to the south by relieving with its 6th Brigade the 139th Brigade beyond Montbrehain. The 6th Brigade, however, receiving this order at 3 p.m. and trying to arrange the relief, discovered at once that it could not be carried out in the time. Headquarters of the 139th Brigade at that moment did not know where its battalions were; actually, receiving no support from the right of the 2nd Australian Division, they were being driven out of Montbrehain by the German pincers movement.⁶³ Accordingly at 4.15 p.m. the 6th Brigade was ordered instead to take control of its three battalions then holding the 5th Brigade front. During the night the 7th British Brigade would relieve the 7th Australian Brigade and the left battalion (24th) of the 6th, and would attack Beaurevoir and Ponchaux at 6 a.m. The 6th Australian Brigade would conform by pivoting on its right and advancing its left to Genève. As so often happened, when

⁶³ Nor could the 6th Bde. discover where the 7th (Brit.) Bde. was.

it was wished to hit the enemy again before he could recover, the arrangements for throwing in the 7th British Brigade were so hurried as to risk defeating their end by bringing success and encouragement to the enemy and defeat and depression to the attackers. Particulars as to artillery arrangements did not reach 6th Brigade headquarters till 3.10 a.m. and had to be telephoned to the battalions. The incoming British 7th Brigade, after a long march in full kit, relieved the 7th Australian between 1 and 2 a.m. but Col. Davis (25th Bn.) noted that its troops did not then know whether they were to attack, and that the orders for one British battalion commander could not have reached him until ten minutes after zero hour. Actually the 9th Devon on the left did not advance till 8.30.

Yet despite this mismanagement the right battalion, 20th Manchester, attacked and entered Beaurevoir. South of the

October 4 Torrens⁶⁴ the 6th Australian Brigade, whose barrage lay stationary for twenty-five minutes to allow the Manchester to come up level, advanced at 6.25. Its left battalion, 22nd, after advancing 1,000 yards without resistance, had to clear a machine-gun from a hedge on its right when approaching Genève factory. Beyond this the leading troops met severe fire from Genève factory and farm, and also from machine-guns shooting across the Torrens valley from Ponchaux and rifle-pits west of it. The barrage,⁶⁵ never very strong, had now gone ahead; the grassy down slope gave no cover. A message was sent back to Col. Wiltshire saying that the battalion could not go on and asking for orders. He replied: "Reorganise, push on, and get objec-



⁶⁴ Col. Wiltshire (22nd Bn.) had asked for this to be the boundary.

⁶⁵ The 6th Bde. was supported by only three field artillery brigades on its front of 2,000 yards; the rest of the 2nd Div.'s artillery supported the 7th Brit. Bde. in the main attack. Capt. L. R. Blake (Sandgate, Q'land) 5th F.A. Bde., formerly a geologist with the Mawson Antarctic Expedition, was killed that day.

tive." This was done, though at severe cost,⁶⁶ Genève factory and cross-road being seized. The Manchester were said to be in Ponchaux; actually a few of them and some Australians reached it but were driven out. Germans could be seen trooping into Beaufort.⁶⁷ Later, despite fire from Ponchaux and from the height ahead of the 6th Brigade, the Manchester pushed up to the 22nd's flank south-east of Beaufort.

The right battalion, 23rd, had discovered during the night that an apparently elaborate trench-system, to be captured by its right company, was only dug a foot deep. After withdrawing, by arrangement, to let the barrage fall, the company advanced and dug in there, having an excellent view of the long ridge opposite, north of Montbrehain, along which the Germans were posted. The left company, like the 22nd, was stopped at the Montbrehain-Genève road, every attempt to go farther meeting intense fire from the three copses on the ridge ahead.⁶⁸ All day along the Roman road, other roads to the north-east, and Usigny ravine, German transport or guns were seen withdrawing, but here again the lack of direct communication from battalions to artillery caused many opportunities for shelling the movement to be missed. The day ended with Beaufort untaken but the 6th Brigade's front protruding between it and Montbrehain.

The German line here was held by the 2nd Guard Divn. (under the 119th) astride the Roman road. Next on the south were Weydt's regiment (80th and 81st I.R.'s), the trench-mortar companies of the 81st and 87th, the very weak 77th I.R. (20th Divn.) and the III/46th R.I.R. The history of the 2nd Guard Divn. says that five attacks failed to reach its position on the railway south of Ponchaux, and, despite day-long bombardment, the morale of the battalion rose.

The 2nd Australian Division still had the 21st Battalion unused; also the 24th had only been lightly engaged and then withdrawn, and the 2nd Pioneers, though (like **Montbrehain** all pioneers of the A.I.F.) technical troops, were available. Early on the 4th General Rosenthal⁶⁹ told

⁶⁶ Among the killed was Lt. P. J. Dawsett (Murchison, Vic.).

⁶⁷ The 22nd's three companies were echeloned back to the left—Lt. J. P. Greene (Ballarat, Vic.) right, Lt. P. G. Chalmers (Ballarat, Vic.) left, Lt. W. M. Proudfoot (St. Kilda, Vic.) in the Torrens, defensive flank.

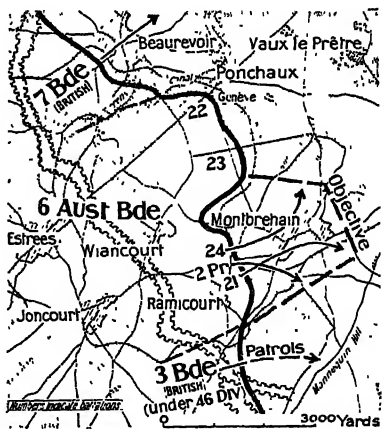
⁶⁸ In Palette Copse was some headquarters, for a German airman after flying over his opponents' line dropped messages there, which a man ran out and picked up.

⁶⁹ Speaking to Col. Annand, commanding the 2nd Pioneer Bn.

the pioneers he was glad he had not been forced to use them. But before noon Rosenthal received from General Monash an order to take over after dusk the line of the 138th Brigade east of Ramicourt, and to capture Montbrehain next morning. The 2nd Division was about to be withdrawn for the rest upon which Mr. Hughes insisted, but General Rawlinson could not relieve it by the II American Corps until the night of the 5th.

General Rawlinson (writes Monash)⁷⁰ desired me to retain control of the battle front for one day longer, and avail myself of the time to make an endeavour to advance our line still further to the east. I selected as a suitable objective the village of Montbrehain which stood on a plateau that dominated any further advance.

The 23rd and 22nd Battalions would remain in their position of October 4th, guarding the left flank; the 21st, 24th and 2nd Pioneer would seize Montbrehain. The Pioneer should take over the whole 139th Brigade's front at dusk. By 5.5 a.m. the 21st and 24th would form up in rear. At 5.50 the Pioneer would withdraw behind them, in time to let the barrage fall at 6.5. Four minutes later the barrage would advance at the rate of 100 yards in four minutes; the 21st and 24th would follow it through Montbrehain and dig in beyond the eastern and northern edges of the village respectively. The 2nd Pioneer would follow them but wheel south to seize a



flanking position beyond the southern outskirts, thus completing the enclosure of the place. The 137th British Brigade would further protect the right by seizing, if possible, Mannequin Hill. Two and a half miles to the north the 25th Division would again attack Beaurevoir, this time with two brigades. It would be helped by eight tanks (4th Bn.) and the Australians by twelve (16th Bn.).

⁷⁰ *Australian Victories*, p. 278.

The operation was of the kind that most Australian leaders had come to dread after the experiences at Mouquet Farm in 1916, the driving of a narrow egg-shaped salient into the German position on the high ground without seizing or, probably, disorganising his artillery. However the two Victorian battalions were overflowing with confidence, and the pioneers, though anxious as to methods and arrangements, never before having attacked as infantry, were equally confident. The general war news kept the troops in bouncing spirits. There would be ample field artillery for the narrow front—eight brigades, all Australian,⁷¹ of which six would join in the barrage. The 23rd Battalion found during the night that the British flank, previously on the railway north-west of Montbrehain, had withdrawn and Germans had trickled in; the barrage was therefore extended to that area.

At midnight the pioneers duly took over the line facing Montbrehain, sent out patrols, and captured a prisoner. The 21st (Lieut.-Col. Duggan) and 24th (Lieut.-Col. James) moved up in the small hours, Duggan leading his men along the heights to avoid the shell-gas that had been poured on the artillery in the valleys, and assembled respectively right and left of the main road from Ramicourt in the valley to Montbrehain on the height. Each battalion had about 240 rifles organised in three companies commanded by men most of whose names have often figured in these pages. Here for the last time we meet the "Brewery" company with Sullivan, the young lawyer, and Bennie, the young engine-driver, and the rest, forming the right of the 21st. Next came Hoad,⁷² and behind them Hardwick. Right of the 24th was Mahony, a famous footballer, teacher at a technical school in Melbourne; left of it his school colleague, Fletcher,⁷³ who had "bached" with him, enlisted with him, as sergeant, and forfeited his rank

⁷¹ They comprised: left group—2nd Div.'s artillery and 6th and 12th Army Bdes.; right group—4th and 5th Div.'s artilleries. The smoke in the barrage would be particularly dense in the first six lifts. The rate of fire was slower than on Oct. 3, but the guns were much denser. As it was certain the Germans would counter-attack against the salient to be formed, the protective barrage would continue for two hours after the objective was gained.

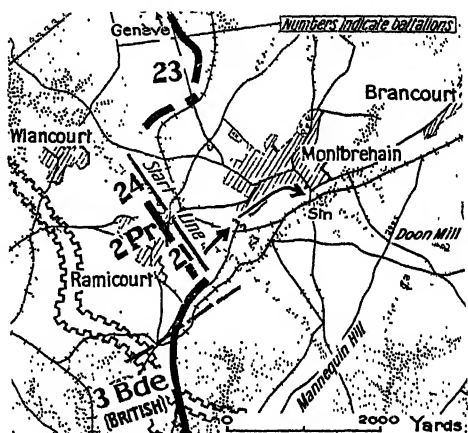
⁷² Col. O. V. Hoad, 21st Bn. Officer of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Melbourne; b. S. Melbourne, 30 July 1888.

⁷³ Capt. J. H. Fletcher, 24th Bn. School teacher; of Eaglehawk, Vic.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 25 Mar. 1893. Killed in action, 5 Oct. 1918.

(as did Mahony) so that they could come away together in the original 24th. Between them, Pollington.

It was the misty morning of a fine day. After their hour's wait, at dawn the barrage fell, on the right strangely thin; some batteries were late. Next, down came the missing shells among the troops causing sharp losses to the 21st. With the artillery unregistered such incidents were likely to occur. The companies went on, and at the first halt, the old front line by the railway, the German barrage fell. One shell killed Sullivan and his signallers.⁷⁴ Lieut. McConnochie⁷⁵ took command. The 21st

went on, following in the half light the churning dust and smoke of the barrage till machine-guns, opening close on the flank, hit a number of Sullivan's company. The line flung itself down, Lewis guns opened, the men advanced by section rushes and, as the smoke thinned, saw two quarries from which the fire came. As they closed the Germans



*Arrows show advance of right half,
21st Bn.*

surrendered—five machine-guns were in a trench in the larger quarry, three in the smaller. Next a machine-gun fired on the left from the first house in the village street; two Lewis-gunners sliced out the window with their bullets. On the right fire came from a sunken road; Bennie fell dead, and Sergt. Moore⁷⁶ across his body. But on the other flank Lieut. Blencowe⁷⁷ with eight men worked up the main street, routed a few Germans

⁷⁴ Also his company sergeant-major, R. W. Thomas (Ringwood, Vic.).

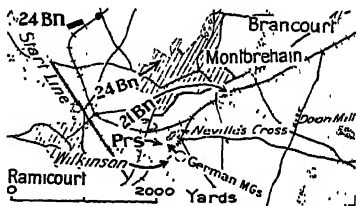
⁷⁵ Lt. W. McConnochie, M.C.; 21st Bn. Cabinet maker; of Melbourne; b. Footscray, Vic., 24 Aug. 1896.

⁷⁶ Sgt. R. J. Moore (No. 6435; 21st Bn.). Farmer; of Elmhurst, Vic.; b. Appin, Vic., 5th Dec. 1882. Killed in action, 5 Oct. 1918.

⁷⁷ Lt. F. W. Blencowe, M.M.; 21st Bn. Draper; of Fitzroy, Vic.; b. Birchip, Vic., 6 Oct. 1893.

from cellars, and turned south to the railway station, where were dumps of stores and ammunition. A pile of beer barrels attracted the troops, and, in a cellar behind, they and McConochie found twenty French women and children who came out so excited that it was difficult to get away from them.⁷⁸ The tanks had been delayed in the gassed valleys, but here one came up. Its officer climbed out, all grease and oil, his grimy driver looking from the machine behind him. The officer said this was his first attack with Australian infantry and he was glad to be with them. And with them he went out of the south of the village, while another party with some of the 24th pushed to the hedges east of it, where Coy. Sgt.-Maj. Trevascus⁷⁹ established three posts.

Meanwhile the 2nd Pioneer, swinging gradually south of the 21st,⁸⁰ had been fighting like skilled infantry. Attached to them and on their extreme right went two guns of the 6th Machine Gun Company under Lieut. Wilkinson.⁸¹ After clearing several posts the pioneers, when advancing through a crop towards the railway in the depression south of the village, were met by intense fire. They sank into the crop. To discover the source of trouble Wilkinson, who acted at each stage after conference with his sergeant, J. P. Adam,⁸² stole by covered ways with a companion to the railway cutting ahead. Finding it empty he crept along it to the left. Where it curved out along an embankment, he was amazed to see, 200 yards ahead, about 100 German machine-gunners manning a line of guns set up on the embankment. They were unaware of his presence and he sent word to his teams to come up. As they moved, two other German machine-guns on a rise



⁷⁸ Later, the troops returned and were given coffee and milk.

⁷⁹ Capt. W. C. Trevascus, D.C.M.; 21st Bn. Builder; of Coburg, Vic.; b. Shepparton, Vic., 2 Dec. 1880.

⁸⁰ Its four companies were in line, their commanders being, from the left: Capt. L. C. Roth to mop up the village, Capt. I. Dimant (Melbourne); Capt. A. C. Ahlston (Melbourne); Maj. E. E. King (Essendon, Vic.).

⁸¹ Lt. N. F. Wilkinson, 6th M.G. Coy.; with Aust. Red Cross overseas, 1941. Customs clerk; of Kew, Vic.; b. Bright, Vic., 5 Dec. 1893. The incident is fully recorded by Lt. W. A. C. Carne in *In Good Company* and elsewhere.

⁸² Sgt. J. P. Adam, M.M. (No. 102; 6th M.G. Coy.). Labourer; of Wangarrip, Vic.; b. 1886.

ahead of them opened, but Wilkinson's gunners crept up and captured each.⁸³ Apparently these were the left flank guard of the machine-gunners on the embankment, for without further trouble the two teams reached the cutting, set up their guns in fair shelter, and suddenly poured in their fire—two belts from each gun.

The Germans seemed to melt. Pushing on, Wilkinson and his men found 14 enemy machine-guns out of action, 30 Germans killed and 50 wounded. The rest had fled. Their right flank guard—two other machine-gun crews met farther on—seemed unnerved by the incident, for they withdrew. A captured German told Sergt. Adam that they were sick of the war and had they known Australians were attacking they would not have fought at all.

This success, which is outstanding even in the history of the A.I.F.'s machine-gunners, allowed the right of the line to reach its objective without further trouble. Wilkinson not being impressed by the position there went farther and asked the nearest pioneer officer to join him; the officer replied that he was on his objective, which was true; one company of pioneers did advance, capturing some Germans; but, the IX Corps operations on the right having failed, it was attacked by the enemy coming up the depression on the right. Lieut. Murrell⁸⁴ extricated it from an awkward corner. Wilkinson withdrew to Neville's Cross.⁸⁵

Farther east the right of the 21st, pushing out from the railway station with its tank, had established itself along a spur south-east of the village. All movement at this end of the village drew the point-blank fire of enemy cannon shooting from the next height, by Doon Mill, Doon Copse, and the edge of Brancourt. The 21st tried to get round the mill, and some reached the sunken road in the gully leading to it.⁸⁶ A German

⁸³ A private, D. Lazarus (Castlemaine, Vic.) of Sgt. Adam's team rushed one, shooting two men and capturing six; L.-Cpl. N. C. Hammon (Ballarat, Vic.) and some of the left team rushed and captured the other gun and team.

⁸⁴ Lt. W. L. Murrell, 2nd Pioneer Bn. Civil engineer; of Essendon and Glenroy, Vic.; b. Castlemaine, Vic., 26 Feb. 1893.

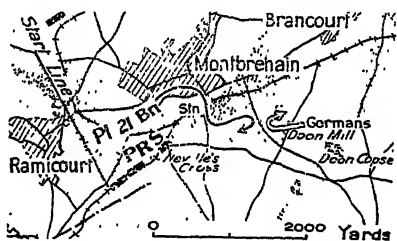
⁸⁵ He was later carried out wounded in the leg, the only casualty in his party. In other portions of the field Lts. F. G. Hamilton (Port Melbourne and Dookie, Vic.) and G. E. Rennie (Bairnsdale, Vic.) of the 6th M.G. Coy. were killed.

⁸⁶ Lt. C. W. Stewart (Wycheproof, Vic.) and Sgt. S. Hoyle (Newcastle, N.S.W. and Melbourne) reached this, and Stewart was wounded. Hoyle sent a German prisoner to the rear with a message, and two stretcher-bearers came under a white flag and carried Stewart in.

officer on a white horse could be seen bringing his infantry again and again up to the crest beside the mill, but the fire⁸⁷ of the Australian posts across the gully always drove them back.

A line was thus established around the southern half of the village. Meanwhile Hoad's company of the 21st and all three of the 24th had attacked its northern half. All met strong opposition from posts in hedges, houses, and trenches along the western edge. Hoad and two of his officers were wounded. The German barrage—mostly in enfilade from the south, and probably directed by observers there—moved eastwards with the Australian advance and caused loss. A tank then arriving, and firing canister shot, helped Mahony's company to seize four German posts. The company then reorganised behind a hedge and entered the village.⁸⁸ Pollington's company met stiffer resistance, first from

a strong German post so close ahead that it had missed the barrage. No tank had yet arrived; the troops sheltered in a small trench. Coy. Sgt.-Maj. Cumming⁸⁹ was killed trying to lead a charge—the



enemy seemed to pick off each man who showed himself. The task looked hopeless but a sergeant, D. W. Witherden,⁹⁰ dashed with a Lewis gun to within 20 yards of the enemy and opened fire. A recently commissioned officer, Lieut. Ingram,⁹¹ then led a charge from one flank while Pollington led from the other. With a cheer the Germans were rushed, forty killed or captured, and six machine-guns taken.⁹² The company then reorganised behind a bank but was pinned there by machine-

⁸⁷ Especially from a post under Sgt. L. R. Ward (Alexandra, Vic.).

⁸⁸ Pushing through a hedge Lt. Clough actually hit his helmet against the muzzle of a machine-gun. His batman, a Russian, J. W. Blankenburg, shot its crew as "cowards."

⁸⁹ C.S.M. G. H. Cumming, M.M. (No. 2354; 24th Bn.). Cellarman; of Burnley, Vic.; b. Fraserborough, Scotland, 8 July 1879. Killed in action, 5 Oct. 1918.

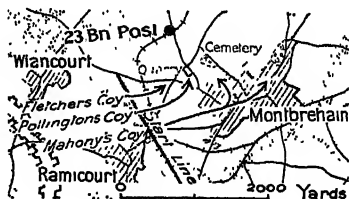
⁹⁰ Lt. D. W. Witherden, D.C.M., M.M.; 24th Bn. Aerated water employee; of Avoca, Vic.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 1 May 1894.

⁹¹ Capt. G. M. Ingram, V.C., M.M.; 24th Bn. Building contractor; of Caulfield, Vic.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 18 Mar. 1889.

⁹² Another account says nine.

gun fire. Ingram rushed several small posts in front but Pollington was badly wounded,⁹³ intense fire meeting all attempts to leave the bank. It was thought that this shooting came from a house near the cross-roads 300 yards north-west of the village; but a Stokes mortar crew firing five rounds—all they had—did not stop the fire though it hit the house. A tank now seen in the village was called over by waving helmets on rifles, and was directed towards the house. As it passed, Ingram jumped out and calling, "Follow me," moved with it directing the company. It was then seen that the Germans were lining the edge of a big quarry. As the tank circled it, Ingram jumped in among the Germans and shot several. From one dugout 63 surrendered, and there were 40 machine-guns in the quarry. While the company was mopping up, Ingram went on to explore some houses, from one of which a machine-gun fired. He was presently found holding up 30 Germans in a cellar; he had shot the machine-gunner who had been firing from the cellar ventilator. Then, seeing Germans bolting from a window, he burst into the back of the house, rushed the cellar stairs, and captured the lot.⁹⁴

Nothing could be seen of the left company, Capt. Fletcher's. Accordingly, after stationing several posts, Ingram went back with the tank and found the company on the western edge of the hill, where it had been caught by terrible fire from the village. A tank had come up and suppressed one machine-gun but Lieut. Gear,⁹⁵ leading on, was killed by another. Capt. Fletcher was next killed by a field-gun firing at the tank. The tank was quickly blown out. Two other officers had been hit.⁹⁶ The senior N.C.O. accordingly held the company where it was.



Despite this fighting the Germans were not yet cleared from the north-west corner of the village. The cemetery a

⁹³ He was succeeded by Lt. W. T. West (Melbourne).

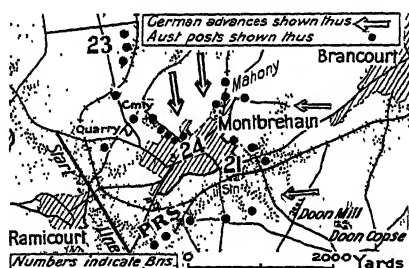
⁹⁴ For his actions he was awarded the Victoria Cross.

⁹⁵ Lt. J. F. Gear, 24th Bn. Student; of Ballarat, Vic.; b. N. Adelaide, 12 Aug. 1894. Killed in action, 5 Oct. 1918.

⁹⁶ Lt. E. L. Forbes wounded, Lt. W. D. Baldie (Thorpdale, Vic.) killed.

little farther on, and a small trench-system just north of it, were on the highest ground; parties of the 24th cleared post after post from these and from the neighbouring roads and hedges before they felt it safe to push on.⁹⁷ The tank came up again and helped them finish the task. It was impossible to cross the open plateau beyond, of which the Germans held the northern edge. The Victorians were even temporarily shelled from the cemetery, but in the quarry were safe and well posted.

While these fights were in progress on the left, most of the two centre companies, Hoad's (21st) and Mahony's (24th), went through the village, many civilians⁹⁸ coming out to meet them on seeing the Germans leaving. Near the north-western end of the village a German officer and half a dozen men were shot as they left the houses. The remaining Germans fled northwards to the edge of the plateau. The left of the 21st reached before others the north-western corner of the village and occupied a small copse beyond and other points. Soon afterwards Lieuts. Clough⁹⁹ and Robinson¹⁰⁰ arrived with twenty of Mahony's company of the 24th. Capt. Roth's¹ company of the pioneers helped to clear the village. Presently Mahony himself came up and looked to the placing of his posts to link with his battalion farther west. As he stood in full view a machine-gun bullet



⁹⁷ Capt. Mahony himself came across to make sure of the safety of his left, and Lt. Clough stationed Sgt. R. Laidlaw and some Lewis-gunners to watch the flank before pushing on. Parties under Lts. West and N. R. Calvert captured at least eight active machine-guns and a trench-mortar that was firing from behind a hedge. (Calvert, who died on 10 Apr. 1920, belonged to Caulfield, Vic.)

⁹⁸ Mostly old people, but a few young girls. One old man wandered up the street without helmet or gas mask, saying "*Anglais bon! bon!*" About thirty went out to the rear but that night some were still in the upper storeys.

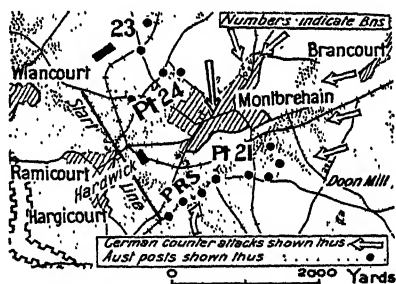
⁹⁹ Lt. H. W. Clough, M.C., M.M.; 24th Bn. Butcher; of Eaglehawk, Vic.; b. Swan Hill, Vic., 23 Aug. 1892.

¹⁰⁰ Lt. J. S. Robinson, M.M.; 24th Bn. Accountant; of Toorak, Vic.; b. Waterloo, N.S.W., 25 Mar. 1887.

¹ Capt. L. C. Roth, M.C.; 2nd Pion. Bn. Surveyor and civil engineer; of Elsternwick, Vic.; b. Sale, Vic., 4 Dec. 1893. Died of wounds, 6 Oct. 1918.

passed through his temple.² His officers could get no touch with their left. About 9 a.m. Germans began to dribble up from lower ground ahead, as well as from Brancourt on the right and from the direct left, setting up machine-guns. The Victorian posts at the copse fell back to the sunken road on the north-eastern outskirts.³ Presently shots came up this road from the right. At the same time Sergt. Laidlaw,⁴ whom Clough had left to watch the western flank, arrived to say that the Germans were back in the cemetery and even in the orchards behind his post. Bombs and ammunition were short, and about 10 a.m. the officers decided that the position could not be held. They accordingly withdrew through the village to the quarries at its south-western edge.

Meanwhile McConnochie's company south-east of the village also had been attacked from three directions and forced back a little on its right. "Having a sticky time," he had written to Lieut. Hardwick of the reserve company at the railway cutting west of the village. "Send us a platoon to come up on our right." Hardwick had sent one, and another to support the 24th. Now McConnochie heard of the withdrawal. "Hun said to be in the village," he wrote. "*Am going to hold on till supported.*" At 11 a.m. the Australian artillery helped him by intensely shelling Doon Mill, driving the Germans from their field-gun.



At 10.15 Col. Duggan (21st) ordered Lieut. Roberts⁵ to

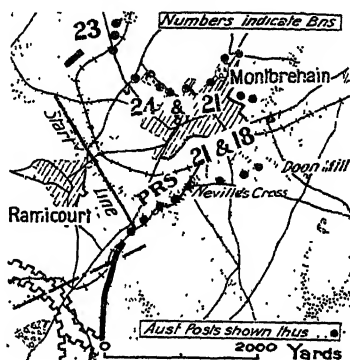
² A few minutes later a German officer and 34 men were captured in a neighbouring dugout; but most of the machine-gun fire came from 500-600 yards.

³ A stretcher-bearer, H. M. St. Clair (Tooradin, Vic.), of the 24th, carried in a number of wounded over completely exposed ground, lifting the last one, a little Lewis-gunner, on his shoulder. The men cheered him. Ptes. P. Gilmore (Castlemaine, Vic.) and W. V. Meakin (Kerang, Vic.), Lewis-gunners, covered the withdrawal and destroyed two German machine-guns. In this sector were Lts. W. H. Roberts, R. A. Gibson, W. B. F. McKiernan (Melbourne) and W. J. Eaton (Northcote, Vic.) of the 21st.

⁴ Sgt. R. Laidlaw (No. 222; 24th Bn.). Carpenter; of Rutherglen, Vic.; b. Rutherglen, 1 May 1893.

⁵ Lt. W. H. Roberts, 21st Bn. Clerk; of Kensington, Vic.; b. Ballarat, Vic., 6 Aug. 1890.

advance again with the two remaining platoons of Hardwick's company and any men of the 24th he could collect. The platoons went off around the west and north of the village. North of it they had to make a dash across the open⁶ and throw out the Germans from the orchards and plantations, Sergt. Edwards⁷ and Corpl. Torney⁸ leading and routing the enemy from this and other cover. By noon Hardwick's platoons were posted along the northern edge of Montbrehain getting touch with Lieut. Gawler (21st) south of the cemetery and with Lieuts. Roberts (21st) and Robinson (24th) who reoccupied the sunken road at the north-eastern end of the village. Coy. Sgt.-Maj. Trevascus and some Lewis-gunners seized a German post that had reoccupied the last house. The enemy withdrew over the open, chased from all sides by Australian fire. Two companies of the 27th (under Lieut. Read and Capt. Beddome) had been brought up to reinforce the 24th. Leaving these west of the village, Read went with Lieut. Clough and with Hardwick's platoons round the northern edge. After sniping at Germans for two hours, till none moved, he decided that the Australians already there were ample to hold the position. The companies of the 27th were therefore sent back.⁹ Lieut. Hardwick led up two companies of the 18th, each fifty strong, to the east of the village; fortunately they brought ammunition, which had almost run out. At 5 p.m. Doon Mill was again heavily bombarded and German activity there ceased.



Montbrehain had been held—north of the Ramicourt road, by the regiments of the 241st (Saxon) Divn. reinforced by their fellow

⁶ Sgt. W. Montgomery (Hawthorn, Vic.) was mortally wounded here.

⁷ L.-Sgt. V. J. Edwards, M.M. (No. 615; 21st Bn.). Labourer; of Launceston, Tas.; b. Launceston, 17 Mar. 1889.

⁸ Cpl. W. G. Torney, D.C.M. (No. 1742; 21st Bn.). Sleeper cutter; of St. Arnaud, Vic.; b. Carapooee West, Vic., 9 May 1897.

⁹ The 28th also had been sent up, to the Beaurevoir Line at Estrées.

heavily by machine-gun fire and sniping. At dusk they retired to a sunken road.

The counter-attack from Brancourt had been ordered by the 51st Corps. Two battalions (I and II/139th) apparently attacked due east, and one (II/179th) was to attack from the south. The whole effort, however, was spent in reaching the alignment of Doon Mill (Arbre Haut) which was only attained by degrees in costly advances, and beyond which, despite repeated attempts, the troops could not go. They were much depressed by the day's events.

At night two battalions of the 118th Regiment, 30th American Division, came up to take over the salient formed by the capture of Montbrehain. At the railway cutting west of the village Hardwick was showing their advanced party his map when the Germans bombarded the base of the salient, and he and most of his party¹⁴ were killed by one shell. Farther north the 25th Division, after a fight that wavered all day, had captured Beaurevoir.

The taking of Montbrehain was the last and one of the most brilliant¹⁵ actions of Australian infantry in the First World War. Yet—as with many local attacks—it is difficult to feel that it was wisely undertaken; it seemed, rather, devised to make some use of these troops before withdrawing them in accordance with the Prime Minister's demand. They gave the enemy a sharp knock and took nearly 400 prisoners; and their line now stood out egg-shaped a mile ahead of the general front. But they did not capture one hostile battery or "let the cavalry through," nor were they intended to do so. The action cost some 30 officers and 400 men.¹⁶ Ten officers, among them some of the best leaders in the 6th Brigade, and many of the best N.C.O's and men, had been killed. At such cost, at this stage of the war, Australian troops could have achieved far-reaching results in any general attack.

¹⁴ Including Lt. Read and another officer of the 118th.

¹⁵ The Tank Corps diary cites as an object lesson the contrast in its experiences with the Australians, "whose relations with the tanks had been extraordinarily close and cordial," and with the troops of the 25th Division, who had not been trained with tanks or even warned that tanks would be operating with them. Though the tanks went around Beaurevoir station and church, back to the infantry, and again into the village, the infantry (it is said) failed repeatedly to follow them; whereas at Montbrehain, when the fire of the tanks tied down the German posts, "the Australians, quick to jump in and seize the fleeting opportunity, made good all their objectives with a minimum of loss."

¹⁶ The Australian casualties were: 21st Bn. 8 officers, 123 other ranks; 24th Bn. 9 and 128; 2nd Pion. Bn. 7 and 106; 6th M.G. Coy. 5 and 22. On Oct. 3 and 4 the brigade lost 8 officers and 53 others. The 2nd Div. between Oct. 2 and 6 lost some 95 officers and 1,600 men.

The 30th American Division relieved the 2nd Division that night, the II American Corps taking command next morning of a one-division front. Rawlinson had been very anxious as to its lack of experience which indeed was still evidenced by many incidents in this relief—one advanced party coming up with the impression that it was to take over billets, and some of the infantry arriving without water, rations, Lewis guns, ammunition or telephones.¹⁷ The lack was temporarily made up from Australian stocks and Cols. Wiltshire (22nd Bn.) and Forbes (20th), Majors Brown (28th) and Matthews (22nd), and a few N.C.O's and men stayed till the Americans settled down, and all the Australian field artillery was temporarily transferred to the II American Corps.¹⁸ The rest of the 2nd Division followed the four others to a far back rest area between Abbeville and the sea. Monash crossed to London and informed Hughes that the divisions had been withdrawn a week before the stipulated time.

¹⁷ Rawlinson, on Monash's representations, had very strongly advised Haig that this Corps, though possessing "magnificent material," was too inexperienced to take over part of the battle front without much longer training. Haig had replied that it must be brought back "after a short period out of the line to reorganise." The Australian Mission had been withdrawn on Oct. 1—Gen. O'Ryan says it had been particularly useful in administrative matters. (One of its officers, Lt. H. B. Davis, was killed, probably when reconnoitring.)

¹⁸ The following Australian units also remained in the line: No. 3 Sqn. A.F.C.; 1st A.T. Coy.; 1st and 2nd Tunnelling Coys.; A.E. M.M. and B. Coy.; and Aust. Corps Salvage Section. Nos. 2 and 4 Sqns., A.F.C. were with the 8th Wing in Flanders.

CHAPTER XXI

THE WAR ENDS

Two days after the capture of Montbrehain British soldiers in France buying the Paris edition of the *Daily Mail* learnt that the German Government had asked for an armistice. Actually this had been asked for on the night of October 3rd as a result of the urgent anxieties set up by Foch's combined offensive in the mind of Ludendorff, to whose reactions this narrative must now turn.

It has been stated here that the Franco-American offensive on July 18th was the turning point of the war. Ludendorff could, or would, not see it; he still hoped to "discover a strategical remedy." While he was engaged in this gambler's speculation "the blow of the 8th of August fell on me."¹ Nearly every German regimental history repeats his dictum: "August 8th was the black day of the German army in the history of this war." Actually it was the day whose events convinced *him* that Germany was beaten. After admitting that "the morale of the German army was no longer what it had been," and blaming part of the troops—but not the policy that for five months had set them at tasks beyond their strength—Ludendorff himself says:

The 8th of August put the decline of that fighting power beyond all doubt, and in such a condition as regards reserves I had no hope of finding a strategic expedient whereby to turn the situation to our advantage.

He decided that "the war must be ended," and arranged the famous conferences with the Chancellor (von Hertling) and Foreign Minister (von Hintze) and the Kaiser, at Spa on August 13th and 14th.² It was agreed that peace negotiations must be initiated; but the generals—especially Hindenburg—could not bring themselves to paint the military situation in colours that would force immediate action, and the statesmen

¹ The quotations are from *My War Memories*, p. 678 *et seq.*

² The Emperor of Austria also conferred with the Kaiser.

received the impression that the approach to their enemies for peace negotiations should not be made until the German armies had re-established a stable front, or even hit back, thus giving the statesman favourable position for the proposal of terms.

But instead of being re-established the German Western Front progressively crumbled, and Germany's allies in the east gave way. As by September 26th the German Government had not approached its enemies, Ludendorff summoned the Foreign Secretary again to Spa. Hintze came on the 29th. Hindenburg and Ludendorff insisted that an armistice must immediately be asked for. Hintze pointed out that the creation of a popular government in Germany was now inevitable. Hertling would resign and the request for an armistice must be made by a new Chancellor—who would probably be Prince Max of Baden, a liberal leader. Ludendorff was assured that the new government would be formed in time to despatch the note on October 1st. It would be sent to President Woodrow Wilson of the United States and would offer to accept as the basis for the peace negotiations the President's "Fourteen Points."³

Difficulties however immediately arose. The German people had so often been assured by its military leaders of the invincible prowess of the German Army that neither they nor Prince Max would now believe that complete disaster threatened it. Max refused to take the Chancellorship if his first act must be to ask for an armistice without preparing either the outside world or the German people. At this stage Ludendorff and Hindenburg feared that their front might break at any moment, and, sending a representative, Maj. von der Bussche, to Berlin, they constantly insisted that no time must be lost in breaking off the fight; the politicians on the other hand urged a policy less akin to complete surrender.⁴

³ See Vol. V, pp. 55-7. Certain inaccuracies in Vol. XI, pp. 739 will be corrected in future editions.

⁴ The explanation of Maj. von der Bussche on Oct. 1 (says Prince Max) "completely crushed" the political leaders. He said that Hindenburg, Ludendorff and the Kaiser had decided "to give up the war as hopeless. Every twenty-four hours might make matters worse . . ." He told Prince Max that the situation had been changed in the last few days by the Bulgarian collapse, the strain created by tanks on the nerves of the troops, and the shortage of reserves. Hindenburg telephoned that the note should go "to-night" unless it was certain that the new government would be formed in time to send it next morning. Hindenburg's phrases constantly implied that the German Army was unbeaten and might protect Germany till the spring; but when forced to a decision his attitude was the same as Ludendorff's: "The situation is daily growing more critical and may force the Supreme Command to take momentous decisions." (From Col. Haeften's report quoted in Prince Max's *Memoirs*, Vol. II, p. 21.)

Prince Max accepted the Chancellorship, signed the note to President Wilson, and sent it on the night of October 3rd, his view being that if he did not do so the military leaders would, either directly or through Herr von Payer, a step that would have proclaimed to the world that the German commanders believed the position of their army to be hopeless.

By October 9th Ludendorff's anxiety had diminished, but he told Prince Max that the danger still existed: "The English could have broken through our lines with their first tank attack," he said. An attack by Rawlinson's, Byng's and Debeney's armies on October 8th (in which the Australian field artillery supported the II American Corps in the capture of Brancourt and Prémont) brought about the retirement—previously foreshadowed—to the Hermann Line.⁵

As it happened Gen. von Boehn's Group of Armies was to be dissolved at noon that day, the Second Germany Army going back to Crown Prince Rupprecht. On the previous day von Boehn had reported that the British on his front were not capable of a big attack. "Only the Australian divisions," he said, "had a high fighting value and they had already been twice used."⁶ Von Kuhl, chief of Rupprecht's staff, differing from Boehn and Ludendorff, expected the attack.

The German Army wanted time to rest and reorganise, and could almost certainly have obtained it had Ludendorff been willing to withdraw straight to the Antwerp-Meuse Line. But Ludendorff desired a stand to be made in order to influence the Armistice negotiations by a show of resistance. That would have been well, says Kuhl, if the Hermann and Antwerp-Meuse Lines had been ready and the army able to stand there; but the conditions were otherwise.⁷ Rawlinson's army struck again on

⁵ The Australian artillery was under the C.R.A. 2nd Aust. Div. (Br.-Gen. O. F. Phillips) acting as artillery commander for the 30th American Div., which made the attack for its Corps. He had the guns of the 2nd, 3rd, 4th and 5th Aust. Div., and the 6th and 12th Army Bdes. A.F.A. Several Australian officers were still with the American Infantry. German air bombing was severe, causing some loss to the 29th Bty. At this stage of the war, after each pitched battle the enemy was followed by lighter forces to his next main position; so the 5th and 3rd Div.'s artilleries were now withdrawn for a day or two while those of the 4th and 2nd supported the 30th Div. in its effort to seize the crossings of the Selle River. Quick communication was very difficult and the artillery scouted with mounted patrols, one of which, under Lt. G. C. Bush (North Sydney) 11th Bty., even entered a village before the infantry. Sections of batteries also advanced with the infantry, two guns of the 43rd Bty. engaging in a duel with two German field-guns. Lt. A. J. Bussell (Wonnerup, W.A.) 37th Bty. was killed on Oct. 13.

⁶ From a summary supplied from the *Reicharchiv*.

⁷ *Der Weltkrieg*, p. 477.

October 17th,⁸ drove the Germans across the Selle River, and took le Cateau. At the same time the British and French in Flanders, having on October 14th renewed their attack, forced the Germans to abandon Lille. On the 23rd Third and Fourth Armies struck again. The II American Corps had been withdrawn to rest, but the artillery of the 3rd, 4th, and 5th Australian Divisions went on under the 6th British Division (IX Corps).⁹

The Germans had now retreated to the Sambre-Oise Canal, where it became evident they would try again to stand. Haig was determined to go on hitting them, and German histories show beyond question that he was right. On October 21st, far back in the rest area, General Hobbs, who in Monash's absence commanded the Australian Corps, was warned that it would shortly be required again. Most of it had then barely settled to rest. The seven battalions¹⁰ to be disbanded had, on October 12th, quietly accepted their eclipse, but General Hobbs, who understood that Mr. Hughes had promised the divisions a long rest, urged on Rawlinson that none of them would be fit for the line for three weeks, and that, if those recently relieved were now suddenly recalled, trouble might occur. Rawlinson agreed to a fortnight's delay. Monash in England wrote to Hughes, who summoned him to an interview, directing that meanwhile he should

do nothing inconsistent with the policy I laid down and which you

⁸ The II American Corps still formed the centre, and this time attacked with both divisions. The artillery of the 3rd and 5th Aust. Divs. had been brought back to the line on Oct. 13; the 30th American Div. was supported by the 8th, 10th, 11th and 13th Bdes. and 6th (Army) Bde. A.F.A. under Br.-Gen. Bessell-Browne, and the 27th by the 5th, 4th, 7th, and 14th Bdes. and 12th (Army) Bde. A.F.A. under Br.-Gen. Burgess. Australian medium trench-mortars helped to cut the wire, and for the first time moved with and supported the infantry. The 11th A.F.A. Bde. was to cross the Selle after the infantry, but in that part the advance received a temporary check, and sections of the 42nd and 111th Bties. had to be withdrawn after crossing. The 113th suffered severely. Lt. N. C. Taylor (Brisbane), 38th Bty. was killed.

After this battle the artillery of the 2nd Div. and 6th and 12th A.F.A. Bdes. were pulled out. Next day the advanced artillery crossed the Selle. The resistance now came chiefly from machine-gunners in hedges and woods, with which this country abounded. The Americans quickly repaired the Selle bridges and grappled gallantly with the machine-gunners, but could make little headway. The artillery found four-horse teams too weak for the active work at this time.

⁹ The 6th Div.'s left group—7th, 10th, and 11th A.F.A. and 14th (Army) R.F.A. Bdes.—was under Br.-Gen. Burgess, and its right group—8th, 13th and 14th Bdes. A.F.A.—under Br.-Gen. Bessell-Browne. The attack was made at 1.20 a.m. and involved, for part of the artillery, a difficult advance through a barrage of gas and high-explosive. After this fight the 7th, 8th and 10th Bdes. were temporarily withdrawn, the 11th being left in the line.

¹⁰ 19th, 21st, 25th, 29th, 37th, 42nd and 54th.

approved—*i.e.* that the troops should have a long and unbroken rest before being called upon to go into the line.

Hughes ultimately decided that, provided the divisions were first given a fair rest, he would not oppose this call upon them. Rawlinson told Hobbs that after the coming battle on the Sambre they might be put in, two at a time, for short tours, but that the fighting would be much less arduous than hitherto.

No one acquainted with their work grudged the Australian infantry their rest, though G.H.Q. resented Hughes's action and the implication behind it.¹¹

On November 4th the Fourth, Third and First Armies with Debeney's on their right drove the Germans from their line between Sambre and Scheldt. The artilleries of the 3rd and 4th Australian Divisions were employed with the 1st and 32nd British Divisions respectively of the IX Corps. The 32nd crossed the Sambre canal after great difficulty, but the 1st and 25th on its right and left made swift progress and that evening aeroplanes reported that all roads ahead were crowded with retiring Germans. Next day the Australian artillery was withdrawn.

Only the cavalry could now keep up with the Germans in their retreat. So effectively had the enemy demolished railway and road junctions and bridges that food and munitions could barely be supplied to the pursuing troops, and delayed-action mines constantly wrecked other key points in areas now behind the British front. After the 1st and 4th Australian Divisions on November 10th began to move up to relieve the 32nd and 66th beyond le Cateau, both were delayed by such explosions.

They were not destined to fight again. In an interchange of notes, following Prince Max's appeal for an armistice, President Woodrow Wilson had insisted that he could not treat with the German Government unless it withdrew from the invaded territories, and also represented a people controlling the policy

¹¹ Two sets of statistics were produced by G.H.Q. One, towards the end of the Australians' rest-period, showed that they had received more rest than other divisions. Had it been drawn up at the beginning it would have shown that they had received less—in any case they had been far more active than the average. The other showed that the casualties per battalion since Mar. 21 were: British—45 officers, 1,082 others; Canadian—42 officers, 956 others; Australian—36 officers, 704 others. Apart from the probability that the Australian battalions were much weaker than the others, and the fact that very few prisoners were included in the Australian figure, such a statement is almost worthless as a criterion of the effort or activity of troops.

and armed forces of its country. If the American Government "must deal with the military masters and monarchical autocrats of Germany . . . it must demand not peace negotiations but surrender." This obvious sign to the German people and soldiers, thirsting for immediate peace, that the rule of the Kaiser and of Ludendorff stood between them and their desire, was followed by the dismissal of Ludendorff.¹² Changes to the constitution, making Germany a limited monarchy but preserving the army's allegiance to the Kaiser, were rushed through in three days. But on October 28th Austria, against whom an Italian offensive had at last begun, asked for a separate peace and armistice. Till then German leaders had hoped, if the terms of their opponents were too severe, to rally the army and people to continue resistance, hoping that discontent would then break out in France and England. But now the German people was turned against its leaders. Its demand for the Kaiser's abdication became outspoken. On October 29th and 30th the crews of German warships in Kiel, which without the knowledge of the Government were ordered by their commander to put to sea in order to fight the British, mutinied. Revolt quickly spread to the land. Moreover on the 30th the Turks signed the terms of a separate armistice. On November 3rd the Austrians did the same.¹³

On November 5th while two reliable divisions (the first of them being the 2nd Guard Division) were being rushed from the front to stem the spreading revolt, there arrived Wilson's note saying that the Allied governments declared their willingness to make peace with Germany on the basis of the Fourteen Points with two modifications,¹⁴ and intimating that Marshal Foch had been authorised to communicate to German representatives the terms of an armistice. The representatives crossed the lines on November 7th, and were handed the terms by Foch (with whom were General Weygand and Admiral Wemyss) in his train at Compiègne on the morning of the 8th. The terms were such that the Germans would not be able to fight again if they accepted them. In addition to evacuating

¹² He was succeeded by Gen. Groener. Hindenburg remained.

¹³ The end of hostilities was ordered on the previous night, but (says the German General von Kuhl with bitter contempt) the Italians continued to cut off masses of retiring troops and claim them as "prisoners of war" until the afternoon of the 4th.

¹⁴ See Vol. XI, p. 749.

within fourteen days all invaded territories they were to withdraw within another sixteen days ten kilometres beyond the Rhine, the Allies and Americans following and occupying the left bank and three main bridgeheads (Cologne, Coblenz and Mainz); Germany must hand over in good condition, without removing them, 5,000 guns, 25,000 machine-guns, 3,000 trench-mortars, 1,700 fighting and bombing aircraft, 5,000 locomotives, 150,000 railway waggons, 5,000 motor lorries;¹⁵ she must also send to an Allied harbour 6 battle-cruisers, 10 battleships, 8 light cruisers and 50 modern destroyers. All prisoners of war must be returned by her, but her own would not yet be returned nor would the blockade be lifted.

As, since Foch launched his offensive in July, the Germans had already lost 6,615 guns,¹⁶ these terms meant their disarming. They were the kind of terms that the German Government and military leaders had hoped their people would rally to resist. The army was beaten and demoralised, but had Ludendorff withdrawn it soon enough and far enough it would have recovered and could certainly have held on behind the Rhine until the spring.¹⁷

But on November 9th some of the British airmen flying over French or Belgian towns behind the German lines could not find an enemy to shoot at. The streets were thronged with people; German soldiers were among them. A revolution, though almost a bloodless one, had happened in Germany. The Social Democrats had insisted that the Kaiser and Crown Prince must go. The workers in Berlin rose and the troops there would not fire on them. The Kaiser at Spa wavered, but Prince Max, receiving a message that he intended to abdicate,¹⁸ authorised the announcement of abdication and added that he

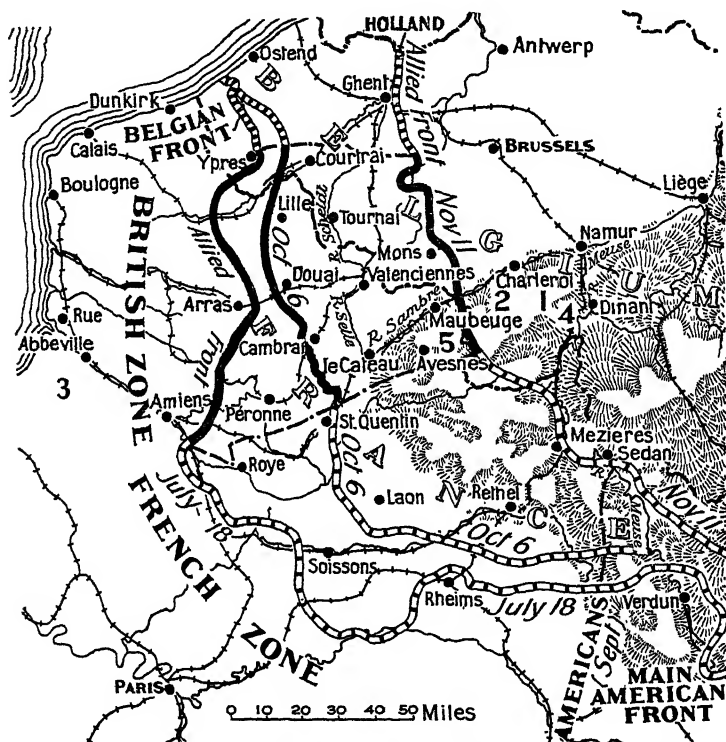
¹⁵ These are the terms actually laid down by Foch. They differ slightly from those previously discussed with some of the Allied leaders.

¹⁶ See *The Last Four Months* by Maj.-Gen. Sir F. Maurice. The British took 188,700 prisoners and 2,840 guns; the French 139,000 prisoners and 1,880 guns; the Americans 44,000 and 1,421, and the Belgians 14,500 and 474—total 385,000 prisoners, 6,615 guns.

¹⁷ Foch had intended to attack in Lorraine on Nov. 14, mainly with the First and Second American Armies. He would have taken Metz but would have been stopped on the Rhine. In the spring, even if the German people had held out, which is unlikely, the blockade and attacks in south-east and west would have forced capitulation. When first asking for the Armistice Ludendorff had looked to it as a means to give his troops the rest necessary for renewing the fight.

¹⁸ Actually he had only agreed to abdicate as Emperor of Germany but not as King of Prussia.

himself was handing over the Chancellorship to the Social Democrat leader, Ebert. The German Republic was proclaimed from the steps of the Reichstag. At the front German soldiers mingled with the villagers, believing—so says an Australian



The front at the Armistice. The location of Australian Divisions after the Armistice is shown by their numbers.

prisoner of war—that they would now be treated as brothers by the enemies who had been exhorting them to fling off their militarist leaders.¹⁹ There could now be no question of opposing Foch's terms. Ebert, as his first action, had to hasten to Foch with his country's acceptance. On the night of the 10th Foch ordered all operations to cease at 11 o'clock next day.

¹⁹ A leaflet dropped from aeroplanes, as well as Wilson's and Lloyd George's speeches, probably encouraged this belief.

The 1st and 4th Australian Divisions were then arriving in the region about le Cateau. Neither there nor at the front was there any general demonstration—the sound of guns ceased; the gates of the future silently opened. Wonder, hope, grief, too deep and uncertain for speech, revolved for days in almost every man's mind while, in the British zone at least, army life went on as usual pending the next decisions. These were that Second and Fourth Armies, each covered by a cavalry division, should march to the German frontier in three stages, following the German retirement.

But it immediately became clear that neither these armies nor the French on their right could carry out the programme. Food—for them and for the flood of returning prisoners and civilians—could not be kept up to them, not to mention ammunition.²⁰ In Fourth Army the Australian Corps was farthest from the front, yet long after the Armistice trouble occurred in the 4th Infantry Brigade to which the staff could not push forward the full rations. By November 20th Foch decided that the force to enter Germany must be cut down by half. Fourth Army was to stop at the frontier. Australian Corps, whose other divisions would be brought up, was to hold the rear area of its army, between the rivers Meuse and Sambre and the towns of Dinant, Charleroi and Avesnes.²¹ Some of its divisions were to go to Germany later.

The end of the war had come almost as suddenly as its beginning. On August 21st the Allies were still planning for the next summer's campaign.²² In less than three months fighting had ended and the British overseas dominions were faced with the urgent problem

²⁰ G.H.Q. had foreseen this difficulty in July, when it estimated that on one day of intense fighting 1,934 tons of supplies were consumed on every mile of front.

²¹ Originally each army was to comprise four Corps each of four divisions. Monash had to leave one division behind and accordingly left the youngest, the 3rd, at Hallencourt, south of Abbeville. Although there were very strong reasons for keeping the whole Corps together during this period, and this was actually decided on, the strain on British and French means of transport was so great that the 3rd Div. never rejoined its Corps in France. The 2nd began to move on Nov. 21, and the 5th on Nov. 24. 3rd Div.'s artillery was with the Corps. Corps Headquarters moved first to le Cateau, then to Avesnes. The final positions were: Corps H.Q.—Ham-sur-Heure; 1st Div.—Presles; 2nd Div.—Marcinelle (Charleroi); 3rd Div.—Oisemont (s. of Abbeville); 4th Div.—Dinant; 5th Div.—Solré-le-Château. Squadrons of the 13th Light Horse were for a short time with the Guards and 62nd Divs.

²² Haig, however, told Churchill that day that they should win in 1918. On July 18 he had told Rawlinson they might do so.

of getting their forces home. In the A.I.F. General White had this under consideration in December 1916 when the British Government also enquired as to the wishes of the dominions and itself took steps to begin the planning. It was recognised that the process involved several stages—the bringing home of the troops—"Repatriation";²³ the reduction of the army from its war footing—Demobilisation; and the reinstating of the soldiers in civil life, which the War Office called Rehabilitation or Reconstruction and Canadians Civil Re-establishment or Re-instatement. In Australia this phase was mistitled "Repatriation." On the 2nd of January 1917 the Australian Government cabled that the whole question of "repatriation" was being considered. On the 13th of November 1917 Birdwood asked it for the repatriation proposals and was told they would be sent him as early as possible. In February 1918 at A.I.F. Headquarters in London Maj. Sherington, who four months earlier had pointed out the need for a small staff to think out the requirements for all three stages, was appointed to organise a "Demobilisation and Repatriation Section" for this purpose. Keeping touch with a Committee formed by the War Office to advise on the whole matter, on August 9th he presented a report on the problem, and in this and subsequent papers many of the methods eventually adopted were suggested.²⁴ One anxiety—due to the fact that the A.I.F. had been enlisted for service only during the war "and six months thereafter"—had been allayed in June 1918 by the Australian Parliament's altering the soldiers' contract and enacting that the period of service should be determined by proclamation by the Governor-General. In August an Empire Demobilisation Committee was formed by a decision of the Imperial War Cabinet; but the A.I.F. scheme was held up by the failure of the Australian Government to send the promised particulars as to its policy of rehabilitation: until it was known in what order Australia desired the troops to be sent back—by units, length of service, trade, or family responsibility—no plan of repatriation could

²³ See *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*: "Return or restoration to one's own country."

²⁴ For example those of unit cadres, quotas for embarkation, method of drawing new equipment to go back with the force, discharge of some soldiers abroad, early clearing of camps and their allocation, early return of convalescents, disposal of military prisoners, education and recreation on voyage.

be formulated by General Birdwood. The same lack of information was holding up the plan of the Education Scheme on which the A.I.F. leaders were relying as the chief means for employing their troops during the long wait—estimated at a year or more—before the last Australian soldier could be sent home. Many soldiers, before deciding on an educational course, wanted to know what occupations were likely to be open to them on their return. The education officers, then being selected, were by far the best agents for spreading accurate knowledge of whatever scheme the Australian Government had. The A.I.F. leaders also wished to issue a questionnaire, approved by other governments in the Empire, to ascertain the wishes of the troops concerning their future occupations. But though A.I.F. Headquarters asked the Australian Government again, in April, June and August 1918, the promised information was not sent, and the questionnaire could not be issued. Instead on August 14th came a sharp reply stating that the information asked for was a matter for the Repatriation Department.

No action is to be taken in connection with this matter other than to comply with requests of the Repatriation Department, which will be forwarded to you through this Department (Defence) from time to time. Regarding demobilisation and return of troops to Australia, policy of Government will be communicated to you when arrived at.

This rebuff, Birdwood noted "quite ties our hands." As precious months were slipping by, on September 10th General Griffiths turned to Mr. Hughes, who though, like others, he had no notion that the war would end in 1918, cabled to Australia his and Mr. Cook's strong approval of the questionnaire. On the 30th General Dodds²⁵ cabled:

A definite policy is needed at once; otherwise we shall be faced with the task of having to repatriate the A.I.F. without a policy or the preparation and organisation essential to success.

This, and other very strong protests brought permission (awaited for six months) to issue the questionnaire; but the

²⁵ Gen. Griffiths had gone back to Australia on leave. The Ministry of Shipping had now undertaken to return 200,000 Australians in 9 months, but could not find out whether Australia would absorb them. Mr. Hughes provisionally agreed that it should be done in 18 months.

other requests were still unanswered when on November 5th Dodds telegraphed:

I really must press you for replies to my previous demobilisation cables. You must realise matter is very urgent.

On the day of the Armistice, November 11th, a year after it was promised, the information came. The Government sent a summary of its rehabilitation scheme and added:

Now decided demobilisation should be directed from London by Mr. Hughes, and you should take his direction on main principles.

This wise but exceedingly belated decision resolved a most unfortunate deadlock.²⁶ Later, after Mr. Hughes had gone to Versailles, Senator Pearce took his place, assuring continuity—a step more helpful than many Australians realised.

On the signing of the Armistice General Birdwood sent General White to London to prepare the scheme for the troops' return. White had always intended, when this moment arrived, to bring to London leading officers of the Australian Corps Staff to carry out repatriation. They were accordingly sent, and with them on November 16th the Demobilisation and Repatriation Branch was formed, White presiding. Mr. Hughes had decided to consult both him and Monash as to demobilisation, and was also determined to obtain now, if possible, for Australian soldiers the opportunity to work in British factories so as to gain experience of benefit for themselves and their country. White strongly favoured this scheme, whose bigness appealed to him, but he felt its carrying out to be a task separate from repatriation, and that he was not best qualified to deal with it. He advised Hughes to entrust Monash with

²⁶ The deadlock had been partly due to the Repatriation Department's fears that the Defence Department was trying to interfere with its work. The fact that the "Demobilisation and Repatriation Section" of A.I.F. Headquarters in London incorporated the Repatriation Department's name was partly responsible for this; Sherington's reports forwarded to Melbourne, also included recommendations as to rehabilitation; and the proposed questionnaire concerned that process. The suggestions were probably not of great value, but they were merely suggestions, and, in the interest of the troops, A.I.F. Headquarters had the right to make them. Gen. Birdwood had urged that a representative of the Repatriation Department should be sent to A.I.F. Headquarters—an obviously desirable step which would have enabled any misunderstanding to be quickly cleared up, matters of mutual concern to be discussed, and spheres of work to be defined; but the answer received after long delays was a refusal. Even an early warning that the Repatriation Department considered the questionnaire valueless would have avoided most troublesome delays in planning the return of the troops. A strongly worded Press message sent by the official correspondent on Oct. 14 explaining the matter and urging that political support was required in London, was suppressed in Australia, but influenced the Government's decision.

the industrial task or, if it was preferred to combine the two, with the whole work. The latter course was adopted and on November 21st Monash was appointed Director-General of Repatriation and Demobilisation. From that moment the energy of the A.I.F. staff and leaders and the minds of its men were directed to repatriation.²⁷ Monash returned to le Cateau and, at his last great conference of divisional and brigade commanders and the higher staff on November 26th in the Brewery Château, launched his scheme.

This work showed him at his best.²⁸ He estimated that he had to repatriate 180,000 men²⁹ and at least 7,000 dependants. The release of troops from France could not officially begin until Haig could dispense with them, which was unlikely to be before February when the peace negotiations might end. Monash expected that 150,000 Australians would be still oversea at the end of that month and 100,000 at the end of May. To keep them content, not merely must a scheme of priority in demobilisation be settled, but they must thoroughly understand it and the reasons for it. As soon as it was settled each unit commander would be responsible for organising his unit in accordance with whatever categories were adopted.

Repatriation would certainly take a year. During that time he would have to control a force that had combined in most effective discipline when engaged on the tasks it had enlisted for, but whose motive for existence had suddenly vanished, and whose antipathy to control when not engaged on that task had often caused anxiety and trouble to those who did not thoroughly understand it.

Monash decided that the A.I.F. must be given a new motive. He told its assembled leaders that their men, in whom during the war they had successfully implanted and encouraged a "fighting morale," must now be instilled with a "reconstruction morale." They must be given a vision of the needs of Australia in the future days of peace, so that each one would be keen to reinstall himself as a useful member of his nation.

²⁷ Blamey wrote to Monash that, though the troops would be disappointed at the postponement of their march into Germany, their main preoccupation was, "When shall we get back to Australia?"

²⁸ For his own opinion see *Vol. XI, p. 827, note.*

²⁹ 95,000 in France and Belgium; 60,000 in Great Britain (stuffs, reinforcements, sick, wounded and convalescents); and 30,000 in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

As the chief means to this end and to another equally important—to provide useful occupation during the months of waiting—Monash seized on the A.I.F. education scheme which, by the immense effort of its organiser, was then as will shortly be told, coming into operation.

Meanwhile the picked staff that White brought to London—now under Brig.-Genl. Foott as Monash's Deputy-Director—was itself grappling with the task of repatriation. It was at once clear that some of Sherington's plans were defective. They had been made in close touch with the War Office Committee, which itself, however, was out of touch with the troops at the front. It proposed, for example, to repatriate the British Army according to the demands of industry, thus averting probable unemployment, and this plan had been recommended to Australia also. The Australian Government, proud of the new tradition of its troops, favoured their return by regiments. But those aware of the soldiers' feelings realised their passionate longing for home and that the only principle likely to seem fair to all was, "first to come, first to go." Mr. Hughes insisted that even the criterion whether a man was married or single must be secondary to that of length of service. Again, in order to secure shipping for soldiers' wives and families, it had been suggested that these should be sent at once, before the troops moved, any remainder having to wait until the troops had gone. Thus young English wives with their babies would have to wait for their husbands in Australia—to them a strange country. But Lieut.-Col. Somerville, then in charge of Movements and Quarters, at once took steps to arrange with the transport branch for "family ships," to sail at intervals throughout the process, carrying husbands together with their wives and young children.

At the end of November, leaving General Hobbs to command Australian Corps, Monash returned to London and took charge of repatriation.³⁰ He arranged that A.I.F. Headquarters

³⁰ With headquarters at 54 Victoria Street. His main staff was: *Deputy-Director*—Br.-Gen. C. H. Foott; assistant Maj. G. Sherington. *Non-Military Employment*—Col. J. H. Bruche, Lt.-Cols. J. M. A. Durrant and T. R. Marsden, Br.-Gen. G. M. Long, Lt.-Col. J. H. Peck, Lt. R. J. Burchell. *Movements and Quarters*—Lt.-Col. G. C. Somerville, Capt. W. A. Perrin, Maj. E. J. Munro, E. C. P. Plant, and R. H. Norman and Capt. R. V. Spier. *Administration*—Lt.-Col. J. C. T. E. C. Ridley, Cols. K. Smith (Medical), E. A. Kendall (Veterinary), Maj. W. Fowler-Brownsword and A. W. Hyman, Capt. F. T. Lukin, E. C. Francisco, G. E. G. Gill and W. J. Denny. *Ordnance and Equipment*—Br.-Gen. W. A. Coxen, Col. E. T. Leane and Capt. P. K. Murphy. *Finance and Pay*—Lt.-Col. H. S. Evans.

in London under Brig.-Genl. Dodds should continue to carry on the records, medical administration, and most of its regular work.³¹ Later, as information of the work of each section was too slow in reaching the others and the troops in France, Monash established his own "administrative branch" whose duty was to co-ordinate the work, and to keep all troops fully informed as to the precise progress in repatriation, rendering them content by taking them into their leader's confidence. The wisdom of this policy was abundantly apparent; the only serious trouble in the shipping of the A.I.F. from England arose in October 1919, through a failure of the naval and military staffs to inform the troops beforehand of a difficulty³² which it was attempted to solve by compromise.

But the task involved also other staffs. In November the Australian Naval Transport Branch, under Commander Parker,³³ had been informed by A.I.F. Headquarters that plans were to be made for sending home 165,000 troops in nine months. On November 20th at a meeting of the Empire Demobilisation Committee to co-ordinate the demands for this purpose³⁴ upon shipping, the Australian representatives had to insist that the standard of space allotted by the Admiralty was not accepted by the Australian department, which, supported by a letter from Mr. Hughes, required provision of a hammock-billet for each man.³⁵ This meant twenty per cent. more space, but it was eventually secured by agreeing to extend the embarkations over 11½ months.

Although Mr. Hughes was now his Government's sole mouthpiece and all cables to Australia had to go through him, he in turn had naturally to consult his Government, and until December 19th the question of the order of priority for the men's return was still unsettled. General Monash now strongly

³¹ Nominally it remained directly under Birdwood.

³² That of repatriating a number of sergeants and their families for whom no 2nd class ship was available. In order to effect this without longer delay a 3rd class ship, *Waimana*, with 2nd class messing had been arranged for; but, through a mistake, the troops had not been informed. They refused to allow their wives to sail in her. The objection was reasonable, and all were re-embarked in a later ship.

³³ Paymaster-Commander C. A. Parker, O.B.E., R.A.N., Aust. Naval Transport Officer in England 1914-20; of East Kew, Vic.; b. Gloucester, Eng., 17 May 1879.

³⁴ It was only one of many urgent demands. For example, Americans and prisoners of war had to be repatriated, and food sent to Central Europe as well as to the Allies.

³⁵ The Admiralty adopted messing space as the basis of accommodation for men but gave 1st class accommodation to officers. On the other hand, living standards of the mass of the dominion peoples were higher than the British.

urged his own recommendation on Mr. Hughes—that the criteria should be

- (1) Length of service.
- (2) Family responsibilities.
- (3) Assured employment.

The Prime Minister agreed subject to his Government's concurrence and directed Monash to proceed on that decision. He further insisted that leave should be given to the men before embarkation. Other principles that had then been settled were:

That men might be repatriated early for special reasons, *e.g.* if they were "pivotal" for Australian industry or commerce.

That applications for discharge outside Australia, though not encouraged, could be granted if sufficient cause was shown.

That extended leave with or without pay could be given on educational or strong personal grounds.

That animals should not be brought back to Australia but sold overseas.

That the authorities of the Red Cross and Comforts Funds should be asked to give generous support during this difficult period.

By the efforts of Mr. Hughes ships were provided much more quickly than was expected, and Monash was directed to get the men away as fast as he could. In the early stages, indeed, it was difficult to fill the ships; but the deadly epidemic of pneumonic influenza that followed the milder epidemic of the summer was then at its height and the medical authorities temporarily agreed upon a wider spacing of hammocks. Moreover General Birdwood had actually started repatriation after the Armistice by (1) warning Australia to keep the "Anzac Leave" men who were already arriving there, (2) extending that leave to men who left Australia in the first half of 1915, and (3) clearing Australian convalescents from England.

Meanwhile Monash worked out a most ingenious scheme for the remainder. Each division³⁶ was to classify its members into "quotas" of 1,000 according to their priority—1,000 being a normal trainload, and also shipload. Each 1,000, though drawn from all services, would be organised as a battalion. As ships were found, the quotas would be called to fill them.³⁷

³⁶ All troops outside the five divisions would for this purpose count as a sixth division.

³⁷ All Australians from the Western Front sailed from ports in England. The French wanted the use of their own railways; moreover the maintenance of huge depot camps at Marseilles was thus avoided.

Each quota if possible had its brass band, and other organised recreation and its education staff. Each went aboard a transport equipped to the Australian standard and with its complement of nurses, its library, comforts, Red Cross stores and dry canteen.³⁸ The 40,000 convalescents went separately under medical control. The squadrons of the flying corps were shipped as units, as were the light horse from the Middle East,³⁹ the process there being controlled by Lieut.-Col. Fulton⁴⁰ as Assistant-Director of Demobilisation. In December and January nearly 20,000 men (convalescents and "Anzac Leave") embarked from England. Through various irregularities five per cent. had to be added to each quota to make sure of filling the ships. In February, owing to a shipping strike, only 5,387 sailed. But from then onwards the scheme was in full swing. Evacuation from France proceeded at a steady rate of roughly 5,000 a week from the end of November. On March 23rd the 1st and 4th Divisions were combined as four brigade groups, and on March 29th the 2nd and 5th. The brigade groups shrank to battalions.

In May, the last 10,000 in France were brought to England where the Australian camps on Salisbury Plain⁴¹ now held 70,000 men, the supply of transports not having quite kept pace with the arriving troops. At this stage Australian soldiers in England were marrying at the rate of 150 a week, and the number of wives and children (mostly under 2 years old) and fiancées carried to Australia in 1919 was 15,386.⁴² The Ordnance Department arranged with the War Office for the

³⁸ A board consisting of Maj. W. J. R. Scott (Quartermaster Branch), Lt.-Commr. J. K. Davis (Commonwealth Shipping) and Lt.-Col. L. W. Jeffries (Medical) dealt with the equipping of transports. The requirements were largely laid down by Col. K. Smith (Medical) and Maj. H. J. R. Clayton.

³⁹ The light horse regimental commanders had strongly urged this course. The order of priority (roughly by length of service of *units*) was fair, as these regiments had not been split up and reorganised as much as had the infantry. Also there could be no scheme of industrial employment or training in the Middle East, and the commanders therefore depended more on *esprit de corps* for the maintenance of discipline.

⁴⁰ Lt.-Col. D. Fulton, C.M.G., C.B.E. Commanded 3rd L.H. Regt., 1915-17; Commandant A.I.F. Headquarters, Egypt, 1917-18, 1919-20. Estate agent; b. N. Adelaide, S.A., 1 Aug. 1882.

⁴¹ They were now organised into one for each division and one for the A.A.M.C.

⁴² 1,719 dependants of munition workers also were carried; the total, when transport was completed, was about 20,000. The great majority were embarked at the wharveside in London, Liverpool and Southampton, the ships having been specially fitted and equipped with conveniences, from playgrounds to baby powder. Women officials visited female passengers at their homes and advised them as to the voyage. Some cases were helped from a special fund. Munition workers and their families were repatriated at the same proportional rate as soldiers.

shipment of full new equipment for the force with the exception of aeroplanes. Repatriation from Egypt, though held up by the political disturbances there, was practically finished by September.⁴³ In England in the same month General Monash handed over control to Brig.-Genl. Jess.

The godsend of the period of repatriation was the A.I.F. Education Scheme. The A.I.F. was late in the field with it.

Canada had its Khaki College established at

Education

Witley Camp, England,⁴⁴ eight months before Australia moved. During the winter of 1917-18 the Canadians extended their classes and lectures to France, establishing a temporary organisation, the "University of Vimy Ridge." In February 1918 a report of this interested General White;⁴⁵ he had in mind the many young Australians who by enlisting had fallen educationally behind those remaining at home, and who in many cases knew no calling except the army. He and General Birdwood saw in this also the ideal occupation for troops awaiting repatriation and one that would provide Australia with citizens in training instead of unskilled men. Unofficial schemes were already working at Southall Hospital and Weymouth Convalescent Depot, where the Red Cross and Y.M.C.A. were training limbless convalescents in a heroic effort to avert the permanent demoralisation of many of them, which otherwise was inevitable. In the anxious month following the great German offensive of March 1918 General White found time to think out the broad essentials.

White abhorred half measures, and the arrival in France of one of the great Australians of his generation, George Merrick Long,⁴⁶ Bishop of Bathurst, gave him the strong, able man for whom he was looking to draw up and launch a

⁴³ Col. Fulton's report says that the outstanding feature was "the wonderful discipline of the troops."

⁴⁴ This college eventually had a chancellor, senate, 48 lecturers, and 1,400 students, with departments of history, mathematics, English, classics, modern languages, Celtic literature, business and agriculture. Dr. H. M. Tory of Alberta University was director, and a Y.M.C.A. official was secretary.

⁴⁵ Lt. G. L. Mayman (Brunswick, Vic.) of the 3rd Div. Signal Coy. wrote to the Official War Correspondent suggesting that the A.I.F. should have the benefit of such a scheme. The correspondent asked White if he might report to him on it, and did so after visiting the Canadian Corps.

⁴⁶ Br.-Gen. Rt. Rev. G. M. Long, C.B.E., Director of Education, A.I.F., 1918-19. Headmaster, Trinity Grammar School, Kew, Vic., 1904-11; Bishop of Bathurst, 1911-28; Bishop of Newcastle, 1928-30; b. Carisbrook, Vic., 5 Nov. 1874. Died 9 July 1930.

big scheme. Long saw in the proposed task a chance not only of helping the troops, but of making Australian citizens. On May 10th he agreed to undertake it, and immediately grappled with it, his objective being to get the system established before the war ended, and sufficiently tested to render possible a swift and great expansion. He began by visiting Australian leaders and units to ascertain their needs; investigated the British system then being initiated, and the Canadian; visited British universities and technical and other schools, and educational leaders, in particular Albert Mansbridge,⁴⁷ founder of the Workers' Educational Association, who volunteered to work under him.⁴⁸

Long was immediately impressed by the fact that, of those who wanted technical training, more than a third wished to follow agriculture; not only men who had been farmers and pastoralists expressed this desire, but many others, who were reluctant to return to city life. About half the remainder wanted commercial and half mechanical training.⁴⁹ Everywhere he found intense eagerness to know the details of the Australian Government's rehabilitation scheme. He then returned to London, having chosen Capt. Thomson,⁵⁰ a Rhodes scholar, as his main assistant there, and leaving Lieut. Mulholland,⁵¹ a high school master of New South Wales, to organise, under Brig.-Genl. Blamey and Maj. Casey, the work in France.

His scheme provided for three kinds of training—professional, technical, and general—to be provided by two means: first, teaching within the A.I.F., second (when fighting ended) farming men out to universities, commercial or industrial schools, and such industrial works as would accept them. To

⁴⁷ Albert Mansbridge Esq., C.H. Founder, Workers' Educational Assn., in England, 1903, in Australia, 1913; First Secretary, 1903-15. Expert adviser to Brit. and Austln. Army Education Service, 1918-19; b. Gloucester, Eng., 10 Jan. 1876.

⁴⁸ Authority was sought from Australia for his employment, but the reply in the files refers to an Australian officer of the same surname.

⁴⁹ After a fortnight's survey Long discussed his project with a committee on May 27, and on June 10 laid his scheme before a meeting of A.I.F. commanders. He afterwards continued his visits to units, speaking to 10,000 men. Their votes confirmed the result of his first survey.

⁵⁰ Maj. H. Thomson, M.C., 50th Bn. Staff Capt. 4th Inf. Bde. 1918. Deputy-Director of Education, A.I.F., 1919. Barrister and solicitor; of Adelaide; b. Adelaide, 27 Feb. 1888. Died 18 Oct. 1933.

⁵¹ Maj. W. J. Mulholland, 1st A.F.A. Bde. Asst.-Director of Education, Aust. Corps, 1918-19. D.A.A.G. (Education), Eastern Command, 1941. School master; of Ulmarra and Ashfield, N.S.W.; b. Wentworth, N.S.W., 29 Dec. 1887.

this end every man would be asked his choice of occupation, the co-operation of British industries and trades unions must be gained, plant, books, stationery, and housing provided, and a staff, teaching and administrative, must be planned, authorised, selected, and instructed for its work. As engineer, motor transport, and workshop and railway operating companies⁵² would be used for technical schools, tables had to be drawn authorising the necessary equipment—from dynamos to pieces of chalk; authority had to be obtained for these and all other “establishments,” and then the staff actually appointed, equipment provided, promotions made, and money found;⁵³ all this at a time when the Allies’ offensive was occupying the strained attention of every commander concerned.

Long, with Thomson as Deputy-Director and Lieut. Rudall⁵⁴ (another Rhodes scholar) as Assistant-Director, battled through the problems, only to be held up by the apparent non-cooperation of the Minister for Repatriation, whose own schemes would much have benefited by co-operation. By September officers and men experienced in education had been selected throughout the A.I.F. To fire them with a missionary enthusiasm added to well-planned technique, Long—now Lieut.-Colonel⁵⁵—obtained the use of Cheshunt College, a Methodist institution at Cambridge and assembled them there for a three weeks’ school. He and Mansbridge brought Clutton-Brock⁵⁶ and other leaders of thought to challenge discussion and reawaken

⁵² In Jan. 1917, the motor transport companies (two for each division) for carrying food and ammunition had become a Corps organisation consisting of (1) headquarters of the motor transport of the Corps; (2) the supply column of the Corps comprising (a) headquarters and (b) a supply column for each division and for the Corps troops; (3) the ammunition park of the Corps, similarly consisting of (a) headquarters and (b) an ammunition sub-park for each division. These units of I Anzac Corps had been given the designation “K” (*e.g.* K Corps Ammunition Park) and those of II Anzac “Y”.

For a different reason—complaints that they were not properly administered in matters of promotion, etc.—six Australian railway operating companies were, in Mar. 1918, placed under an administrative headquarters in charge of Lt.-Col. S. H. Hancox (Ipswich, Q’land), who was attached to the Director-General of Transport at G.H.Q.

⁵³ A cable to Senator Pearce, Minister for Defence, immediately brought an advance of £5,000 for emergencies. A finance committee of Gen. White, Bishop Long, Br.-Gen. Dodds and the Chief Paymaster controlled expenditure subject to authorisation from Australia—an excellent method if the work had not been a race against time.

⁵⁴ Capt. Hon. R. J. Rudall, 50th Bn. Assistant-Director of Education, A.I.F., 1918-19. Solicitor; of Gawler, S.A.; b. Gawler, 27 Sep. 1885.

⁵⁵ Maj. F. A. Wisdom acted as his military secretary and Lt. R. J. Bowden (N.S.W. Department of Education) as registrar of students.

⁵⁶ A. Clutton-Brock Esq., essayist and art critic; b. Stourport, Worcester, Eng., 23 Mar. 1868. Died 8 Jan. 1924.

independence of thought among his officers, who formed study groups (a system Long intended them to practise), thrashed out their syllabuses, and chose text books.⁵⁷

The pre-Armistice negotiations were then proceeding, and during the second school the crisis came—the Armistice.⁵⁸ A prospectus outlining the scheme had been issued in October, but the drafted establishments were not yet approved and the questionnaire not yet issued. The demand of the British and oversea forces for text books and scribbling blocks far outran the supply. Books on Australian agriculture being unprocurable even from Australia, Long told Lieut. Kelly,⁵⁹ a South Australian sheep breeder of wide education: “A new set will have to be made.” Kelly returned to Cambridge and in three weeks wrote a practical handbook, *Beef, Mutton, and Wool*, one of the first and best of fifteen useful “Land Books” written by members of Long’s agricultural section under Capt. Birks⁶⁰ (of Roseworthy College, South Australia⁶¹).

The most difficult problem now lay in gaining entrance to industrial works. Although the trades union leaders were most anxious to help, British labour was so diluted, and the problem of reinstating British soldiers in their own industries was expected to be so thorny, that the unions were naturally very cautious. Long, therefore, decided to rely mainly on institutions and not attempt to place men in paid employment. Mr. Hughes, however, was determined upon this, and, being outspokenly contemptuous of the education scheme, told Monash that this part of it must be kept out of Long’s hands. Monash healed

⁵⁷ Among the members of this and the next school who are not elsewhere mentioned in this chapter were Lt. A. R. Chisholm (now Prof. of French, Melbourne), Capt. F. L. McDougall (later Econ. Adviser to Aust. High Commr. in U.K.), Lts. A. U. Tonking (later Chief Secretary, N.S.W.), C. C. Crane (Dept. of Agric., Sydney), J. A. Aird (Closer Settlement Commn., Vic.), K. S. Cunningham (Aust. Council for Educ. Research, Melb.), A. W. Hicks, and J. Gordon McKenzie (both afterwards Directors of Education, N.S.W.).

⁵⁸ Long, in trench coat, on the insistence of his associates led a procession around Cambridge.

⁵⁹ Lt. W. S. Kelly, 48th Bn. Farmer; of Tarlee, S.A.; b. Tarlee, 24 May 1882. (A married man, 35 years old, he had been wounded as a private of the 48th Bn. at Villers-Bretonneux.)

⁶⁰ Capt. W. R. Birks, 2nd Div. Art. Agricultural expert; of Adelaide; b. Adelaide, 11 Mar. 1886.

⁶¹ On Capt. Birks’s staff were also Capt. F. A. Chaffey and H. B. D. Barlow. Lt. J. H. Vaughan edited the series. *Beef, Mutton, and Wool* was reprinted in 1920 by an Adelaide publisher.

the misunderstanding by an admirable compromise.⁶² Men boarding outside the A.I.F., attending universities, technical schools, industrial works, and farms, would be classified as engaged in "Non-Military Employment." Long would continue to direct both Education and that part of Non-Military Employment which concerned placing out men anywhere as learners; the placing of them simply as employees would be directed by a nominee of Mr. Hughes, Lieut. Burchell,⁶³ with a special staff.⁶⁴ Both sections would come under Col. Bruche⁶⁵ of Monash's staff. By undertaking that both the number of men applying and the duration of the scheme would be limited, Hughes and Long finally secured the generous agreement of unions and employers,⁶⁶ and on December 19th the scheme for Non-Military Employment was announced and applications called for from the A.I.F. in Europe and the Near East. The scheme, however, required intense organisation—ascertaining each applicant's wishes, finding an opening for him in Britain or elsewhere, settling principles and practice as to his pay, maintenance and allowances, transferring him, keeping his record, maintaining touch with him (in any of 1,000 different places) and checking his progress. The Herculean efforts of Long and his staff with the help of A.I.F. Headquarters had established the machinery without which even the part added by Mr. Hughes to the immense task would have been impossible.

The purely educational effort was farther forward, though the arrangements with Australian universities to credit candidates for matriculation with work done at the A.I.F. schools

⁶² Hughes asked Long to lunch next day, Monash having explained that the Educational Service "had already done an enormous amount of good work which I had no intention to scrap." A project of Hughes to secure British Government workshops fell through.

⁶³ Lt. R. J. Burchell, M.C., 4th B.G. Rly. Op. Coy. Railway official; and Member of C'wealth House of Reps., 1913-22; of Cottesloe, W.A.; b. N. Adelaide, 1882.

⁶⁴ Another of Mr. Hughes's appointees, Maj. W. L. Marfell (Warrnambool, Vic.), was to be placed in charge of work in the wool industry. In practice he and others made sensible arrangements with Long's staff to share the work. Bruche's staff dealt also with all personal applications—for extended leave, discharge in England, and early repatriation.

⁶⁵ Maj.-Gen. Sir Julius Bruche, K.C.B., C.M.G., A.A. and O.M.G., 5th Aust. Div. 1916-19, C.G.S., Australia, 1931-35. Officer of Aust. Permanent Forces; b. Melbourne, 6 Mar. 1873.

⁶⁶ They were to avoid areas in which there was unemployment; skilled men must be paid union rates; they must join the union of their trade and be withdrawn immediately in case of industrial trouble, or, on request, if trade was slack. Unskilled or partly trained men were not favoured, skilled labour being already diluted.

were far from complete. Professor Holme⁶⁷ was being sent from Sydney; and, with two university men already on Long's staff,⁶⁸ he would represent the Australian universities in the carrying out of the scheme.⁶⁹ But some 100 education officers had been appointed, allowing one for each division, artillery brigade, and battalion or regiment, besides staff.⁷⁰ Those with the units were to see each man, ascertain his choice of occupation and of training, seek out possible teachers and lecturers, inform their men of the scheme, and arrange for the attendance at divisional or other schools of those whose requirements could not be met in their own unit. In some brigades classes had been going during the October rest;⁷¹ indeed in a few units they had been started months before on the initiative of keen leaders, notably in the 8th Field Ambulance in France⁷² and at Moascar Camp in Egypt.

But in France the moves in November caused a break in continuity; and even when the Corps settled around Charleroi much keen interest died away through constant interruptions for leave, duty, or repatriation of students or teacher, and through the delay before text books or stationery arrived.⁷³ Except where enthusiasm conquered almost impossibilities, most of the regimental classes failed.⁷⁴ Lectures by visitors proved more practicable but in France were not always well

⁶⁷ Capt. E. R. Holme, O.B.E. Assistant-Director of Education, A.I.F., 1919. Professor of English language, Univ. of Sydney, 1920-40; b. Footscray, Vic., 18 Mar. 1871. He and Assistant Professor F. A. Todd had organised a company of reinforcements from Sydney University. After two months in camp it was about to sail when fighting came to an end.

⁶⁸ Lt. E. V. Clark (Lecturer in Electrical Engineering, Univ. of Adelaide) and Lt. H. W. Allen (Vice-master, Ormond College, Univ. of Melb.). In London Lt. L. H. R. Gordon (Educ. Dept. of S.A.) joined them and dealt with soldiers who desired experience as teachers.

⁶⁹ They formed an "Administrative Committee," originally appointed by Australian universities by arrangement with the Australian Government to negotiate with British universities for the admission of Australian soldier undergraduates. It was afterwards decided, however, to return these undergraduates at once to Australia.

⁷⁰ The divisional officers were: 1st—Capt. M. Auroousseau; 2nd—Capt. N. R. Mearns; 3rd—Capt. I. G. Symons; 4th—Capt. A. L. Rossiter; 5th—Capt. E. W. Frecker. Lt. F. J. E. Gallagher was responsible for education in the Corps units. The depots in England were in charge, first, of Capt. F. W. Robinson, and, later, of Capt. Mearns.

⁷¹ Especially in the 4th and 13th Bdes., 4th Div., where Capt. Auroousseau, Chaplains F. W. Rolland and F. H. Durnford, and others were keenly active.

⁷² Organised by Sgt. J. Creswell.

⁷³ These were obtained through the divisional officer from the library under Lt. (later Mr. Justice) H. H. Henchman in London. Books chosen were of convenient size and cheap, and were sold to men at cost, three-quarters of the price being refunded if they were returned in good order.

⁷⁴ "The boys enjoyed them—they were keen, but they never had a chance," writes Capt. W. C. Belford, 11th Bn.

chosen or prepared. Far more successful were the schools organised by the Corps or divisions. The camp of the Australian Corps military school, among the sand-dunes between Rue and the mouth of the Somme, was used for the secondary and commercial school (known as the Corps Central School) under Lieut. R. S. Wallace⁷⁵ to prepare 500 officers and men for the matriculation, accountancy, and civil service examinations in Australia. It opened on January 11th, enthusiasm overcoming the lack of stoves and fuel. In April the examinations were held. It was a matter of national concern that the results, excellent for so short a course, should be recognised in Australia; Long had to give the A.I.F. a virtual pledge on the point, and recognition was ultimately obtained. In May the school, still working, was transferred to Salisbury Plain.

At Jeumont, near Mons, Maj. Greenlees,⁷⁶ an officer of the Australian Corps engineer staff, secured a large, damaged glass factory for the Corps technical school. With the Corps Workshop Company and 1,000 prisoners, he retiled it, fitted it with trainloads of damaged machinery looted by the Germans and then abandoned. Finally, drawing his staff from the Corps, he organised 4-6 weeks' classes in eighteen trades for 500 students. They were billeted around; many extended their attendance, and 2,000 in all passed through. On May 6th this school joined Wallace's at Havre and both went together as "quota 48" to Salisbury Plain where, late in July, they shipped for Australia in the *Main*, continuing their studies during the voyage.

The 2nd Division at Charleroi was allowed by the Belgian authorities and the enthusiastic Director of the University of Labour there to use that splendid institution, the Belgian staff helping the Australian instructors. The 5th obtained a large factory, housed 500 students in the upper floor, and carried on elementary, commercial, and secondary classes on the lower floor. The railway operating companies, and other technical

⁷⁵ Sir Robert Wallace, now Vice-Chancellor of Sydney University; of Kew, Vic.; b. Aberdeenshire, Scotland, 1 Aug. 1882. (Then Professor of English Language and Literature, Univ. of Melb. On his staff was Lt. R. P. Franklin, Headmaster of Melbourne Grammar School. The Commandant was Maj. C. R. Lucas, 53rd Bn. The staff comprised 6 officers, 3 warrant officers and 12 sergeants.)

⁷⁶ Maj. A. McP. Greenlees, O.B.E., M.C., 1 Anzac R.E. Workshops. Naval architect; of St. Kilda, Vic.; b. Glasgow, Scotland, 17 Mar. 1880. Died 18 Aug. 1928.

units, dental units, and A. and N.Z. bakeries at Rouen also ran classes attended by students from other units. Students also went to British army schools. In all there were 47,000 enrolments in Australian classes in France, but the greatest number of students seriously attending at one time was probably not over 10,000.⁷⁷

In England the early classes at the depots were interrupted by the rapid embarkation of troops to make room for those from France. It had at one time been intended to run central schools here as in France; but in December Lieut. Kelly discovered that, for students interested in wool, the great British institutions in Yorkshire were empty and—though without authority to do so—he secured from their directors⁷⁸ and the British Wool Buyers' Federation most generous offers to take A.I.F. students in special courses and give them experience in factories. Famous breeders also offered to give others experience on their sheep and stock farms. Long at once obtained from Monash authority to move the men.

This decision settled the policy of A.I.F. education in England. Except for a special school of surveyors at Southampton, and an Agricultural Training Depot established by Capt. Birks at Sutton Veny Camp for more general and elementary instruction,⁷⁹ the A.I.F. established few schools in England. Here the main effort was to obtain for A.I.F. men in France or elsewhere—including Egypt—whatever opportunities for training or employment outside the A.I.F. they desired. One of the first decisions was to send back to Australia undergraduates of A.I.F. universities in time for the March term. For others the department seized on opportunities ranging from scholarships offered by the Rhodes Trust⁸⁰ to a generous invitation to study perfume manufacture by the secret processes of a Riviera factory. Applicants were not asked to surrender their proper priority in repatriation, but

⁷⁷ The army service corps, the medical units, and, till they parted with their horses, the artillery, had many regular duties to carry out although fighting had ceased.

⁷⁸ From Professors W. M. Gardner and E. Midgley at Bradford and Halifax, Professors A. F. Barker and C. Crowther at Leeds University, and Dr. T. Oliver, of Galashiels.

⁷⁹ This really began at the end of March with 400 students.

⁸⁰ Mainly from funds originally allotted for German students. Australians benefited largely by this.

might state how many months' delay they were prepared, if necessary, to accept. The Government allowed them their pay over and above their wages, if any, and assured them of either wages or living allowance up to a fixed standard.⁸¹ To insure better communication between France and England in this scheme Brig.-Genl. McNicoll was appointed its Inspector General.

The main function of the regimental education officers now was to obtain the men's applications for Non-Military Employment. These were overwhelming: one man wanted experience as a deep sea diver, another in "training wild animals"; but generally Long's forecast was correct, and a great part of the educational staff was concentrated on meeting the demand. Professor Holme's committee became the University Section of Long's staff, and placed 259 students at British universities,⁸² 35 at continental ones, 65 at the Inns of Court, 133 in educational training mainly under the London County Council; 18 dentists went to the University of Pennsylvania, and so forth. The agricultural section under Birks arranged the courses and tours already referred to. Experienced sheep and cattle farmers as well as less experienced men leapt at the chance. Of 50 A.I.F. students at Bradford Technical College Professor Midgley wrote, "This is the best team I have ever handled." Parties⁸³ toured all farming areas in England, and went to Denmark; 100 learnt pig-raising in America; others tomato and flower-growing in the Channel Islands; 500 concentrated at the Royal Cardiff Show as guests of its organisers. In the Technical Section under Maj. Webb over 3,500 were placed in works or institutions—460 studying architecture, town-planning, building and engineering; 571 motor engineering or driving; 661 took commercial courses; 307 studied postal telegraphy in the British Post Office, or wireless telegraphy, 124 tailoring, 100 music, 65 art. Others obtained experience ranging from navigation to nursing and work in natural history museums. Of fifty students in forestry at Edinburgh Univer-

⁸¹ Where institutions required fees, the Australian Government usually paid for privates and nurses three-quarters of the fee, for sisters and sergeants two-thirds. Officers paid their own fees.

⁸² 126 at London, 48 Oxford, 10 Cambridge, others at Leeds, Edinburgh and elsewhere. The medical service at first made its own arrangements, taking 149 post graduate courses and 61 hospital appointments.

⁸³ One led by Col. H. W. Murray, V.C., another by Capt. W. D. Joynt, V.C.

sity Professor Stebbing⁸⁴ wrote, "They are the keenest men that I ever had to deal with". Lieut. Burchell's Industrial Section⁸⁵ placed over 4,700—846 for automobile experience, 764 for general engineering, 398 for building, 414 insurance, 285 shipbuilding, 276 in electrical trades, and others in railways, aeroplane factories, groceries, butchering, baking, printing, cinema, stage and other occupations.

In March, just as the scheme expanded into full operation, Long's health broke under a strain probably heavier than that borne by any other great leader of the A.I.F., and from which, it is said, he never fully recovered. His promotion to brigadier-general on January 1st, though helpful, did not lessen the number of interviews, addresses, appeals, and letters that kept him under continuous tension. He was ordered a fortnight's rest and in April handed over to McNicoll.⁸⁶ With the transfer of troops to Salisbury Plain education at the depots expanded, and then it dwindled as they left.⁸⁷ In England complete courses of training or experience—usually of three or four months—were given to 12,880 soldiers or nurses, apart from lectures and regimental classes at the depots.⁸⁸ In Egypt, where there was no opportunity for Non-Military Employment, a purely educational scheme was carried out by Lieut.-Col. E. M. Williams.

The A.I.F. education scheme did not achieve all that was hoped. Despite the unselfish forethought of White its preparation began too late. To obtain instructors Long had to promise them that their repatriation should not be delayed by joining him, a provision that led to great difficulties. The full machinery was not ready by the Armistice, and after men had been promised Non-Military Employment,⁸⁹ or even books and paper,

⁸⁴ Professor E. P. Stebbing. Lecturer in Forestry and Head of Forestry Dept., Univ. of Edinburgh, 1910-20, Professor since 1920. Saw active service as a transport officer in Macedonia, 1916; b. 1870.

⁸⁵ After February it was under Lt.-Col. W. H. Sanday.

⁸⁶ Gen. McNicoll's report is the best record of the scheme.

⁸⁷ 42,000 men enrolled in instructional classes in England. Lectures, debates, conferences and short tours were organised. The Sutton Veny agricultural school sailed, as a unit, in August, 2,000 students having passed through. Gen. McNicoll's work ended in September, when Maj. Wisdom was ordered to begin closing down the scheme.

⁸⁸ In addition 500, largely in France, took ordinary correspondence courses, but at low fees. In all 18,577 men or nurses applied for Non-Military Employment, and 18,431 were approved.

⁸⁹ The application form, "540," involved too slow procedure.

months of delay occurred without fulfilment. During the actual war, even if the scheme had been ready earlier, regular teaching would probably have been possible only at the convalescent depots (where it was imperative) and bases, and little more than lectures, debates and the provision of reading matter at the front where, nevertheless, in such episodes as the Somme winter many men hungered for mental occupation. After the Armistice inevitably a proportion of trainees used the system (as they said) for "Non-Military Enjoyment."

Yet no part of the A.I.F.'s war effort more richly repaid the nation. The mere reading of the prospectus, and the organising of regimental classes, had deep influence, turning men's thoughts to their own and their nation's future, and to the problems of peace. Perhaps more influential than anything else was the feeling that the "heads" were thinking for them; even the majority, who did not enrol, probably suffered many doubts whether they should not do so. Some unit commanders noted that the scheme brought marked improvement in discipline. The warm, friendly attitude of the Belgians helped, as did the conducted tours to Brussels, Waterloo, and elsewhere. The schools were especially helpful in such ways as giving farmers instruction in mechanical or business methods useful to them, and both the industrial and the university training brought concrete advantages to students and nation.⁹⁰ The turning of the A.I.F.'s effort from destruction to construction may well, when finally weighed, be judged Long's greatest work.

By these wise measures the A.I.F. returned to its homeland with less trouble even than the British Army. Only No. 4 Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, No. 3 Australian Casualty Clearing Station, and some of the railway operating men reached Germany.⁹¹ The history of the 40th Battalion says:

⁹⁰ At least one distinguished scholar and many leaders of business were thus trained, and several industries introduced to Australia.

⁹¹ The squadron went to Cologne and the C.C.S. to Euskirchen on the Rhine. Some other Australians reached Cologne "unofficially" and the local A.P.M. "did not see" them. Mr. Hughes (*Reveille*, 30 Apr. 1930) has hinted that mistrust of the Australians' discipline accounted for their divisions not being sent to Germany while Canadian and New Zealand ones and the Newfoundland Regiment were; this may be correct, though G.H.Q. records show that on Nov. 27, when the War Office asked Haig to release two Australian and two Canadian divisions for repatriation, he refused until he knew how many divisions were required in Germany. It is said that the Canadians, when ordered to Germany, complained that the Australians were being favoured by earlier repatriation.

The first draft left [France] on the 17th February 1919, and it was only then that we realised that this brotherhood of men existed no longer as a battalion of infantry. For quite two days before this draft departed there was a feeling of irresponsibility about all of us. We drank in fellowship together, pledged ourselves to meet again in Tasmania and . . . for once felt sorry that the war was over. Those of us who remained stood in the rain and watched the draft move off. Farewells were shouted, mostly facetious, with reference to future meetings in favourite Tasmanian hostelryes. But as the column moved beyond us we stood watching them in silence as they plodded away from us through the mud and rain, till they passed out of sight . . .

The greatest strain on the discipline of the force actually came when transports reached Australia and, sometimes through the detection of a single case of influenza, were quarantined although the epidemic was already beginning to spread throughout the country. It is said that by *delaying* the epidemic the quarantine probably saved Australia a heavy toll of life.⁹² The officers, ships' captains and quarantine authorities organised what amusements they could and the trial was generally borne with astonishing good humour.⁹³

At the end of September only 10,000 Australian troops remained in England.⁹⁴ On December 26th Monash reached Melbourne and almost immediately went into civilian clothes quietly to build up, in face of great difficulties, the huge electricity undertaking of Victoria. On the 1st of April 1921 the First A.I.F. ceased officially to exist, and on July 1st the military hospitals in Australia passed into civilian hands.

⁹² This is discussed in Vol. III of the *Official Australian Medical History*, now being prepared for publication.

⁹³ In one case, that of the transport *Somali*, which arrived at Adelaide on Jan. 28, serious trouble took place. No case of influenza had occurred since the ship left Fremantle. The troops believed that quarantine at Adelaide would be avoided by continuous submission to treatment; but after two days' delay, although an informal message was received that the South Australians were to be taken off and the ship allowed to go on, this was not carried out. On the 30th the troops threatened to take control of the ship. One of the leaders, a member of the Federal Parliament, Gnr. G. E. Yates, was afterwards tried by court martial and spent a month in detention, but through the death of his father was released before his full term ended.

⁹⁴ The A.I.F. took part in several famous parades through London—on "Anzac Day" (25th April) 1919; on May 3 in the Dominion Troops' march; and on July 19—the Victory march. In Australia, ever since, the returned soldiers, sailors, and airmen have marched through the streets of their several State capitals each year on Anzac Day.

CHAPTER XXII

THE OLD FORCE PASSES

AFTER the First World War there was a natural tendency among impatient radicals to shirk the trouble of a very difficult judgment by a careless verdict of "both to blame." But it was no real help to the brave new world to lead its members to imagine that, if they had sat in conference with the Kaiser and his councillors, they would have found the atmosphere as favourable to the ideal of man's brotherhood as if they had sat with Asquith and Grey. It did not really favour progress in humane ideals to teach that a ruling class deliberately schooled in the principles of Clausewitz and Bernhardt would tend to mould human affairs as generously as one brought up in the creed of the English public schools.

Unfortunately, history supplied all too swiftly the corrective. Those who for ten years after 1919 painted the German war leaders as actuated by motives no less beneficent than those of their opponents were visibly chilled when confronted with a return to the old Prussian style in the new Nazi regime. It is true that Nazi-ism accentuates every anti-social evil of the old Prussian rule, and rests on the support of masses of young Germans deliberately warped by mis-education; that it aims at exterminating or enslaving "inferior" races, some of which the old régime would merely have tried to absorb. But the principle of international conduct that the leaders of Germany then upheld—that might is right—was the same, and involved the same revolt against the slowly developing system of law and order, the only medium in which humane civilisation can steadily grow. Nearly every symptom that marks the Nazi return towards international chaos and permanent war was observable in the methods of the German leaders in 1914-18: the march through Belgium which they were pledged to protect; the use of gas which they were pledged to avoid; the bombing of London and shelling of Paris with missiles that could only

be aimed at the population in general—all these were blows struck at the international order on which civilisation stands. The most cynical treacheries of Hitler's career have not surpassed the German orders either to release or *spürlos versenken*, "sink without trace," the small Argentine ship for whose people Germany was at the moment professing friendship.

There can be no question which side then, as to-day, offered more hope for humanity, or which the mass of humanity favoured. And the historian who misses this broad truth, which was patent at the time¹ though obscured later in the maze of *post mortem* argument, ignores the essential source of the Allies' strength and German weakness. A historian of the Württemberg Army says that the Allies' propaganda was so good that even Germans most intelligently instructed in politics could not help asking themselves, "Isn't there something in it?" Actually the British propaganda directed at the German people and soldiers was powerful because of the truth in it.² The support unintentionally given to it by Lichnowsky's memoir, exposing to Germans the fact that the blame for the outbreak of war lay with their own Government, materially affected the German will to continue the war. The converse was generally true of the Allies—among the motives that sustained the efforts of their soldiers and peoples, consciousness of the humanity of their cause was all-powerful.

In Australia 10,000 miles from any active theatre of war, the sense of extreme danger to the country's freedom was absent. Indeed if, as is often stated, during the submarine campaign of 1917 Great Britain came within measurable distance of starvation and possible surrender, the British people themselves were at the time unaware of their peril. Certainly this was the case in Australia; and the war effort there, much more largely than in Europe, was based on ideological grounds. Actually the danger to Australia through the submarine campaign of 1917 was deadlier than that to the Mother Country. Had Britain then been forced to surrender, the peace treaty would have abolished the British navy. The British

¹ Both Ludendorff and Hindenburg in their memoirs complain that Germany could not attract support even from small nations that she had offered to "deliver."

² See *Secrets of Crewe House* by Sir C. Stuart; also *The Commonsense of War and Peace* by H. G. Wells (*Chapter 14*). The propaganda by which the Allied press swayed its own peoples was by no means so truthful.

people would have remained, with the chance of some day regaining its freedom. But the Australian people might not have had that chance; without the British navy after the war Australia would have lain open to the Japanese. In 1938-41 a more ruthless aggressor by crushing nations one at a time proved that, for the security even of the greatest peoples, only one policy was trustworthy—to combine with other nations in fighting the aggressor at that time and place at which he could best be defeated. Those who waited for invasion waited beyond the time and place at which defence of their freedom was possible, and entered the fight only with the certainty of losing it. But the fact that nation after nation bordering the aggressor has failed to realise this many illuminate the difficulty of such realisation in the First World War by a people 12,000 miles away.

The Australian people did not make a total effort; they did not take every step that could have been taken had they felt themselves face to face with the threat of immediate extinction. Like so many other peoples since, a great part of them would recognise that threat only if it came in one form—invasion of their country. The strongest opponents of conscription were sincere when they said that, if Australia was invaded, they would be in the fighting without any conscription. In the political situation in which conscription was actually proposed it could only be introduced by the unprecedented method of popular vote; and the attempt to do so in a community which did not feel the imminence of personal danger raised a strife that has not healed in twenty-five years. The Australian attitude sprang from no desire to shirk but from experiences dating from the "convict" days which made each freeman intensely sensitive of injustice to the "under dog" and suspicious of authority. Many felt that the war was too remote for compulsion. Yet except for pacifists the issue was one of expediency and not of principle. The opposition came largely from parties of the left, with whom compulsion was a normal method and who in other lands had never hesitated to use it in a desperate war. As it was, the proposal almost secured the necessary majority.

But whether, with people so divided, the war effort would

have been aided by compulsion is more than doubtful. The campaign for it tragically hampered recruiting: with some leaders, opposition to this method quickly turned into opposition to the war effort—and this at a time when, unknown to his opponents, Ludendorff was seeking to weaken and strike down the Allies by encouraging precisely such divisions through hopes of negotiated peace.³ The student will probably agree with Andrew Fisher⁴ that the attempt to enforce a proposal carried against such feeling might have been disastrous. Compulsion could have been usefully introduced only if the mass of the people realised, through personal danger, the need.

Basically, Australians were not singular in their reaction. The war efforts of all sovereign states, as of individuals, were a measure not only of their virility, courage, loyalty—or other qualities that make up national morale—but also of their realisation of the direct threat to possessions which that morale would lead them to defend. It may be conceived that, drastic as were the drafts on British man-power, those on the French, whose country was invaded, were more searching, and possibly those on the German nation, whose leaders realised that they had pitted their people against the world, more drastic still. In proportion to population none of the British oversea dominions sent abroad an army as large as did the Mother Country. Australia's population equalled, roughly, one-tenth of the British, and, to be proportionate, her expeditionary formations on the Western Front would have had to rise, at maximum, to 175,000. Actually their maximum appears to have been slightly over 120,000.⁵ The ratio maintained by New Zealand would be definitely higher than Australia's; that for Canada, which was less seriously threatened, was lower. On the other hand the Australian and New Zealand forces were almost entirely front line troops. While the Mother Country maintained, at maximum, some 50 infantry divisions on the Western Front, Australia managed to keep in the line—though with great difficulty—five,⁶ which, though often weaker than

³ For Ludendorff's own words on this point, *see pp.* 459-60.

⁴ *Vol. XI*, p. 299.

⁵ Their average strength there was, in 1916—86,163; 1917—118,454; 1918—110,031.

⁶ Canada maintained four, at fuller strength, and a very large force of railway and forestry troops of great value.

others, more than made up for it by their effectiveness. In all, Australia maintained oversea a naval force,⁷ five infantry and the greater part of two cavalry divisions, four combatant and four training air squadrons, and a number of smaller units.⁸ Such an effort by a daughter State, situated at the part of the world farthest from the actual fighting, constitutes an immense success in this experiment in co-operation between the forces of free colonies and their motherland, and is attributable entirely to the regime of freedom which the first chapter of this history described.

The qualities of the Australian forces, good and bad, these volumes have endeavoured truthfully to show, and there is neither need nor space to expound them here. From outside as well as from internal sources comes overwhelming evidence that the A.I.F., like all other armies from the British dominions, was found to be among the most effective military forces in the war—a judgment applicable to every Australian division, mounted and unmounted—and that the quality of the nation's seamen and airmen was as high.⁹ Australian nurses were noted for the same resourcefulness and determination as the men.

To what conditions did the British oversea troops—at any rate the Australians—owe their effectiveness? Hindenburg, who says that “the *élite*” of the British Army were “men from the colonies,” attributes this “undoubtedly to the circumstance that the colonial population is mainly agrarian.”¹⁰ Actually, however, it was not mainly agrarian except in the sense that agriculture occupied a much larger proportion of the overseas people than of the British, and, owing to the sparsity of the population, the city folk were in closer touch than most Europeans with country life. But in Australia this condition

⁷ At maximum, a battle cruiser, six light cruisers, six destroyers, and a sloop. A submarine was lost off New Guinea and another in the Gallipoli Campaign.

⁸ Including three tunnelling companies, six railway operating companies, a number of hospitals, an armoured car unit, and others.

⁹ Lt.-Col. L. A. Strange, commander of the 80th Wing, R.A.F., in which served the two Australian fighter squadrons in France, wrote: “It became the practice for our Australian squadrons to lead the 80th Wing’s bombing raids. When later in the year (1918) over a hundred machines set out on one of them, the spearpoint was always formed of Australian airmen led by an Australian.” (*Recollections of an Avman*, p. 175.)

¹⁰ *Out of My Life*, p. 330. The best French divisions were probably those of French colonials, and the Germans in East Africa seem to have had similar qualities.

had become much less marked in the last generation, and the percentage of Australian soldiers who had acquired their powers of determination, endurance, and improvisation from country occupations was probably not much more than a quarter.¹¹

It is true that the war furnished ample proof that, in general, country life produces a much better soldier than city life. In most European armies the troops from crowded industrial areas were visibly poorer in physique, mentally more helpless, and morally less virile and capable of endurance, than those from country parts.¹² The ravages caused by industrialism on the physique of sections of the English people were horrifying to many Australian soldiers who had known England only from folk-lore, and similar effects were visible among the Germans. Differences between country and city soldiers were also definitely perceptible in the A.I.F., though to a very much less degree. For example, an outstanding feat by a platoon would be explained by such a comment as, "They were country boys from around Shepparton." The artillery drivers and men of the regimental transport—mainly country men used to horses—were always regarded as particularly staunch. It was noticeable that in acts of heroic leadership, after clergymen or their sons who figure most noticeably in such records, farmers and other country men are outstanding.¹³ The value placed by Australian generals on their various battalions could usually be judged from the order of priority in which they sent rested troops into attacks, and it was noticeable that brigades or battalions from the agricultural or pastoral States were, other things being equal, usually thrown in before those from the more industrial ones. But the fact that many city Australians spent holidays in the bush, and many also had been brought up there, undoubtedly modified whatever difference in quality would otherwise have existed.

Naturally very many other conditions affected the value of the troops—none more so than the leadership given to them; a change of commander more than once brought an Australian

¹¹ The number following "country occupations" is given as 57,000 out of 330,000, but a proportion of "labourers" (99,000) were probably also country men. See *Vol. XI*, p. 874.

¹² City troops were sometimes, though not always, quicker witted.

¹³ Professional men were notable; also some of the "hard cases."

infantry battalion or brigade from near the bottom of the list in fighting value to near the top. Australian troops were far more level in value than most others, and under such leaders as Elliott, Gellibrand, Holmes and Neligan, units recruited chiefly from the great cities were, at one time or another, probably unequalled in the force. Nevertheless, taking the record over the whole war, Australian leaders would probably give first place to certain units from Western Australia and Queensland, States that were colonies of colonies, largely populated by energetic elements from the other States.

But the city element in the A.I.F. was so large, and the perceptible distinction between it and the country element so small, that it seems certain that, in the case of this force, country training was not the main reason for effectiveness. A more important one was that, compared with the Motherland, all the dominions may be said to have "picked" their troops, inasmuch as their forces were disproportionately small and dominion man-power was much less deeply drained. Yet this also does not account for the higher effectiveness of the oversea troops, for when they fought beside some of the first-raised troops of Kitchener's Army—undoubtedly men of wonderful spirit and pure devotion—the difference impressed itself deeply on even so keen a lover of the British Army as Brudenell White.

In 1917 British leaders in France and Belgium began to recognize a special effectiveness in dominion troops and attributed it to the fact that their divisions seldom left their Corps, and therefore operated constantly under leaders and staff who knew them. The blessed word "homogeneous"—applied to the Canadian and Australian Corps—was then assumed to explain everything; and it is true that, for many reasons—but chiefly for those referred to below—the oversea divisions were at their best under their own leaders and staffs. Yet the 1st Australian Division was indubitably outstanding at Hazebrouck, away from its Corps, and the New Zealand Division shone out wherever it went. Unquestionably the A.I.F. also owed its physique and morale partly to the will and ability of Surgeon-General Howse who, when recruiting fell low in Australia, successfully resisted very strong pressure from there to allow

unfit men to serve in the theatres of war.¹⁴ It may be contended that by this policy Howse threw an unfair burden on British units partly filled with less fit men. On the other hand Australian battalions with their reduced numbers were holding fronts and achieving successes greater than ever before, and both troops and leaders believed that dilution would have decreased their achievement.

But while all these causes undoubtedly influenced the effectiveness of the A.I.F., and most of them affected all dominion forces, any one who moved among these—including, perhaps, the reader, who has lived for a day among the Diggers at the Brewery farm, Querrieu—is aware of another difference between the life there and in the forces of the Motherland. In the dominion forces the atmosphere was that of democracy. In British military tradition—the example of Cromwell's Roundheads notwithstanding—this has generally been looked on as a condition adverse to military effectiveness, and it has always furnished the main problem in the co-operation of British colonial forces and those of the Old Country. Speaking of officers of the American Provincial forces that served beside the British regulars in the Seven Years War, 184 years ago, Sir Charles Lucas¹⁵ says that they

were the democratic soldiers of democratic communities, and there was no social gulf between them and the rank and file. . . . It was a system . . . poles asunder from the rigid rule of the British Army, where the officers formed a caste, as compared with the men.¹⁶

¹⁴ For discussion of this see *Official Australian Medical History, Vol. II, pp. 845-55, 900-903*. The youth of Australian leaders was, of course, partly a result of the rapid expansion of the force. Thus of those frequently mentioned in this history Maj.-Gen. Bridges was 53 at the outbreak of war, Howse 50, Monash, Chauvel and Hobbs 49, Birdwood and Griffiths 48, Gellibrand 47, Rosenthal 39, Glasgow 38, Brudenell White 37, Elliott and Leane 36, MacLaurin 35, and Blamey 30. Glasgow was major-general at 42 and Rosenthal at 43, and White temporary lieutenant-general at 42. When given their battalions Lt.-Col. D. G. Marks was 22, W. J. R. Cheeseman 23, A. H. Scott, D. T. Moore, A. S. Allen, R. M. Sadler, E. J. Parks and N. M. Loutit 24, O. G. Howell-Price 25, J. W. Mitchell and J. J. Corrigan (who had enlisted as a private) 26. R. J. Dyer was lieutenant-colonel and C.R.E. 4th Div. at 24, and V. A. H. Sturdee, R.A.E., lieutenant-colonel at 26. H. Gordon Bennett was brigadier-general at 29; the majority of battalion commanders were in the thirties—for example, Neligan 34, Whitham and C. H. Elliott 33, Salisbury and Marshall 31. Exceptions were Lt.-Cols. Price Weir, 48, and Burnage, 55, who were looked upon as old men, though fit. Br.-Gens. Burston and Spencer Browne, who were 58, though they pluckily reached Gallipoli, were quite evidently too old for the campaign. Norman Marshall, in 1914 a private, in 1917 commanded a battalion. Maj.-Genl. Gellibrand, a captain in 1914, commanded a division in 1918.

¹⁵ Sir Charles Lucas, K.C.B., K.C.M.G. Head of Dominions Department, 1907-11; b. 7 Aug. 1853. Died, 7 May 1931.

¹⁶ (From *The Empire at War, Vol. I, p. 19*.) Many other factors, such as clashing moral standards and disputes as to relative rank, also divided those forces.

In that and other wars, despite many instances of really keen mutual appreciation, the British officers as a whole disliked and despised the disorderliness and lack of smartness of the Provincials, while the Provincials, including Washington, felt bitterly that in some crises the British regulars did not measure up to colonial standards. The distinction, though much diminished, was still clearly noticeable in the Maori and South African wars; and, though in the Great War co-operation on both sides was most loyal and generous, and regularly cordial, the same causes, though greatly modified, did not fail to produce similar, if much less dangerous, effects.

To some extent the great and ancient traditions of the British Army operated against understanding. Reared in a community that was divided socially by sharp distinctions and in general accepted that condition, and from their childhood assuming it to be the basis for leadership and discipline of the fighting services, British leaders, high and low, had genuine difficulty in believing that any force observing opposite rules could be effective. A British staff officer of first rate intellect reported as an "insuperable" obstacle to the formation of new Australian divisions in Egypt in 1916 the fact that "the Australian Training Depot in Egypt has always found the greatest difficulty in producing officers of any value and non-commissioned officers of any sort at all."¹⁷ Yet the 4th and 5th Australian Divisions, which were forthwith formed there, were, at least by 1917, being used as picked, shock troops. Their whole artillery was raised from practically untrained men; one brigade of 850 members, for example, included only 5 former artillery officers and 18 trained artillerymen with, at first, only 5 guns instead of 16 for training them. Yet within three months it fired over Australian infantry at the battle of Fromelles—admittedly not without justifiable anxiety on the part of both.

By 1918 a slowly widening circle of "contacts" was recognising that the performance of oversea forces was partly due to marked capacity in their officers and N.C.O's and intelligent initiative in their men. Australian officers were realists and, provided their troops were clean and their guns and transport fit for any action, they did not usually insist that buttons must

¹⁷ See Vol. III, pp. 33-4. For the Admiralty's long opposition to an Australian navy, see Vol. I, p. 10, and Vol. IX, pp. xvi-xxx.

shine, hubs and chains sparkle, and martingales be pipe-clayed;¹⁸ but the report of the inspecting officer of Fourth Army on their transport in the Somme winter was typical:

They were [necessarily] standing in a sea of mud, but nevertheless the horses were in distinctly good condition. Waggon were filthy and many tail-boards broken.

The old criticism—that these men might make fighters, perhaps, but soldiers never!—was now succeeded by the assumption that their effectiveness was due to their having acquired British military discipline.

The Australian is a different individual now from when he came (to France), both in discipline and smartness

said Haig in May 1918.

Yet in truth the A.I.F.'s discipline was never better than on Gallipoli. In the history of war there is no more signal example of reckless obedience than that given by the dismounted light horsemen at The Nek when, after having seen the whole first attacking line mown down within a few yards by a whirlwind of rifle and machine-gun fire, the second, third and fourth lines each charged after its interval of time, at the signal of its leaders, to certain destruction.¹⁹ Much dispute as to discipline is due simply to not defining that term—a useful definition was, "Reliability at all times and under all conditions given correct and appropriate leading."²⁰ But, given any reasonable definition, the Diggers' increased effectiveness in 1918 was due, not to improved discipline, but to skill acquired through longer experience and training. Indeed in 1918 such an incident as the charge at The Nek could not have happened. Australian leaders knew, and British commanders above them came to know, that these troops had the habit of reasoning why and not merely of doing and dying. Some leaders resented this attitude, but it was one reason why overseas troops tended, on the whole, to be more carefully handled.²¹ "I often wonder," said General Gellibrand, "which spur most induced towards

¹⁸ Admittedly Lt.-Col. H. W. Lloyd's 12th (Army) Arty. Bde., which did maintain this standard, was one of the best in the force.

¹⁹ See *Vol. II*, pp. 607-23, 631-2.

²⁰ This was the definition upheld by General Gellibrand.

²¹ For example memories of the protests over the transport *Drayton Grange* were the direct cause of the great care taken in properly fitting transports for the A.I.F.

the efficiency of an A.I.F. commander—the one from above or the one from below.”

The Australian soldier did not want to die (says one who knew him).²² He wanted to do the job he had come for—to beat the enemy. To that end he was determined to take any amount of pains, understand his weapons and his tactics better than the enemy did, so that, when it came to killing, the odds would be against the enemy.

To paint the A.I.F. as a miniature of the British Army would be completely to miss whatever dearly bought lesson their co-operation in the First World War can give to either of their nations or to humanity. In some vital respects they represented opposing theories, the British Army inheriting an almost feudal tradition, the A.I.F. developing, though on British lines, a democratic one.²³ What Haig and most other British leaders and writers on the war—with outstanding exceptions in C. E. Montague²⁴ and John Masefield—never realised was that the efficacy of the A.I.F. was not in spite of the Australian Jack's being as good as his master, but because of it—or, more accurately, because in the A.I.F. Jack and his master were the same.²⁵ Social equality in civil life had produced men with the habit of thinking for themselves and acting on their decision. In the army they continued the habit, and were not backward in giving advice to their leaders if they thought it necessary. Yet their herd instinct was as strong and irrational as in any people. The Digger's unspoken, unbreakable creed was the miner's and bushman's, “Stand by your mate.”

Whatever the merits or faults of democratic government in war, the freedom that it alone, apparently, ensures to its citizens seems to build the best soldier because it develops the whole man. The Australian soldier was in the main the British “worker” perhaps two generations removed, but developed (as John Galsworthy saw) to nearer the Briton's natural stature. His mark was his freedom—he had been bred in it, and in the army he remained as free as a soldier can. This gave him resilience and a colourfulness certainly beyond that of any other

²² Col. A. G. Butler, official medical historian.

²³ The son of Maj.-Gen. J. G. Legge, founder of the Australian military system, was killed fighting as a private in the division that his father had commanded.

²⁴ Montague's lesson for the British people is contained in his brilliant essay *Disenchantment* (*Chap. XI, pp. 158-160; 1924 Edn.*) in which he says also some hard, and true, things of the Australians.

²⁵ Among the Australian people equality was social and political, but not economic.

force as a whole; the Digger and his officers might be good or bad, but it would be idle to try to paint them as docile.²⁶ The splendid elements in the force never built up a glowing reputation behind the lines but some reckless or criminal individual was sure to spoil it.

These qualities called for a method of discipline totally different from the old British Army system of suppression; this restless, inquisitive material required, from the day of its enlistment, active, positive leadership; and democratic principles, prudently applied, furnished excellent leaders. It was a great advantage to the A.I.F. that officers were chosen from the whole force instead of from certain cultural or social layers in it. The field of selection was thus vastly wider, and both juniors and seniors were chosen mainly for their known personality and capacity in leadership. Monash and White—two men who in their youth had to struggle for their education—rose to be among the ablest generals of the Empire: Monash, so Mr. Lloyd George implies, might have commanded the B.E.F. had his ability been known to the War Cabinet.²⁷

The problem of the discipline of the A.I.F. when out of the line appears to have been best solved by Monash in the 3rd Division: every step to provide humanising and civilising amenities in camp, and to render training useful and interesting, repaid tenfold the cost. All Australian officers were expected to care for their men before themselves, but lack of provision for mental recreation was of great detriment to most of the force.²⁸

The absence of any basic social barrier between officers and

²⁶ For the character of the Australian see *Vol. I*, pp. 4-8; of the Australian soldier, pp. 46-8. These rich types, keen men under strong leaders, have been reduced by some Australian caricaturists to that of a slouching "dag", intent only on beer, thieving, "skirts" and scoring off nincompoop officers. The false legend thus set up has travestied the First A.I.F. and damaged the Second.

²⁷ See *War Memoirs of David Lloyd George*, Vol. VI, pp. 3,382 and 3,423-4.

²⁸ Some commanders were not competent to assess its value, but it is notable that Monash and White were prominent in thinking out and providing such amenities (and also in enlivening training).

Perhaps the most striking object lesson of the value of this policy was given by the methods of Br.-Gen. R. E. Williams (Ballarat) and Maj. W. T. Conder (Launceston, Tas.) at Langwarrin. This was a camp for the reception of men who contracted venereal disease, a disability from which the A.I.F.—partly because of its qualities but mainly through its wide separation from home—suffered (as the figures show) very severely, as did the forces of the other Dominions and the U.S.A. In two years, simply by increasing the decencies and humanities at this camp—largely by way of physical and mental recreation—these officers reduced the military offences to one fourteenth, the practice of leave-breaking to one twenty-eighth, and that of desertion from 88 to *nil*. The change of method also greatly improved the rate of cure; 6,000 men from here served in the A.I.F. overseas; 400 won decorations, one the Victoria Cross.

men carried the immense advantage that they served with a unity of spirit almost impossible under a more feudal tradition, strong and real though the comradeship in the British Army was. On the other hand a definite weakness in the A.I.F., though perhaps a minor one, was lack of education in precise and careful use of the English language.²⁹ This was clearly due not merely, if at all, to default in individuals but to the Australian educational systems, for constant evidence of it is found not only in reports from patrols and outposts, but in staff memoranda and even papers written by medical officers containing the results of scientific observation. The consequent ambiguity sometimes robs the information of at least part of its value. By contrast, the reports of British officers, even in critical situations, are notably precise, and usually include the vital details of the date, hour, and place at which they were written. How dangerous the misuse of a word may be has been shown by the misunderstanding and delay that followed the wrong use of the term "repatriation" in Australia.

There is thus, apparently, strong ground for believing that the absence of social barriers and the comparative equality of opportunity under conditions of "colonial" freedom were among the prime causes of the effectiveness of the overseas forces. Those conditions were also, though far less than of old, one of the sources of what may be called the "family differences" which, in the First World War, as in the Second, German propaganda constantly tried to foment in the hope of splitting the Empire's unity and, incidentally, of destroying the men with whom it professed to sympathise.

Any degree of combination of armies—even those of most closely related peoples—is beset by difficulties; and, though co-operation probably was never happier than in the British Empire in the War of 1914-18, the historian has the responsibility of marking these pitfalls. Apart from the difference in social outlook already mentioned, the factor most disturbing to the all-important unity of the Empire's effort was probably, so far as the A.I.F. was concerned, the widespread belief of Australian soldiers in 1918 that they were given more than a proportionate share in the fighting, especially in attack or

²⁹ Gen. White, on the other hand, was almost fastidious in choice of word and phrase, and Monash, Gellibrand and others were carefully precise.

defence of crucial sectors, and less than their meed of rest. That the strain put on them was partly due to Monash's deliberate policy, and not to Haig's, Monash himself states,³⁰ and the Australians would probably have felt only flattered by their rôle had they, when possible in 1918, been given rest periods proportionate to their undoubtedly vigorous action, as were the Guards and the Canadians. Most troops, so long as they were well rested, preferred an offensive rôle to the wearing, endless hardship suffered, for example, by the German trench divisions.

G.H.Q. was undoubtedly faced by a difficult dilemma. Both British and German leaders had tried to prevent the special use of some divisions for assault and of others mainly for defence, since the effect on the defence divisions was depressing. And there are reasons for suspecting that the British command at first particularly tried to avoid using overseas divisions as shock troops because German propaganda seized eagerly any chance to proclaim that the British and French were making their colonials do the attacking. That no dominion division was included in Haig's original thrusts on the Somme in 1916 and at Ypres in 1917 may have been due to this policy. But as time went on certain divisions, by their proficiency or reliability, forced the Commander-in-Chief to use them if he was to be confident of results. Among these were the Guards and a number of other British divisions, probably including—through their independent, stalwart outlook—all the Scottish ones; and every overseas division.

The same circumstances gave rise to friction in regard to publicity. Oversea troops believed that they were given less credit than was due to their employment as shock troops, whereas the British soldier thought that they were given too much.³¹ But not till the present narrative appears will most British soldiers have had any opportunity of knowing many of the facts on which communiqués, which at the time seemed unduly to stress colonial actions, were founded. British troops regarded the overseas contingents as merely additional forma-

³⁰ See pp. 773, 875.

³¹ Their constant mention was naturally hurtful to pride. In July 1918 Gen. Plumer, after sending to his wife in three successive letters news of achievements of the 1st Aust. Div., writes on the 14th of "a very good performance. I am very glad it was done by British troops." *Plumer of Messines*, p. 178.

tions of the British Army—which they were not—and did not see why “Canadians” or “Australians” should be mentioned whereas their own divisions were screened in the general term “British.” Among dominion troops also misunderstanding arose through the ambiguity of that term which, contrary to frequent usage,³² G.H.Q. regarded as including oversea units, but the oversea troops understood as excluding them.

Admittedly it was difficult to keep the different forces content, but to do so was as important as to counter German propaganda. The first reaction of Haig’s staff to the Australian complaints was to deny, probably with sincerity, that any troops were used as assault divisions. It is certain, however, that they were³³—and this is probably to some degree reflected in the fact that, in proportion to the number of troops overseas, the Australian casualties were much the highest in the Empire.³⁴ In the end the compensating rest was usually given, though not—at least in the case of the A.I.F.—without strong representations.³⁵ General White held that, in future, a dominion force so co-operating should, as a condition precedent, have direct access to the Commander-in-Chief—at least in any matter of such urgency.

The best means of preventing inevitable jealousies from creating serious friction would have been deliberately to increase each partner’s knowledge of the difficulties and achievements of the other. To acknowledge achievement has always been a necessity of military leadership. On the other hand, instead of flattering his men with newspaper reports Monash might well have impressed on them, when they were inclined to be critical of British conscripts, the simple truth that the British people, though lacking many privileges of comparative health, wealth, and freedom that have always made

³² See, e.g., its use by Gen. Plumer quoted in the previous footnote.

³³ Possibly G.H.Q. was slow to realise what it was actually doing; but on 30 Mar. 1918, discussing the use of the Guards Division with the M.G.G.S. of Third Army, G.H.Q. directed: “This division should not be used to bedrock owing to its value as a counter-attacking division.” The extent to which Australian and Canadian Corps were used for aggressive fighting in 1918 may be judged from a statement of Sir Hugh Elles (*Army Quarterly*, July 1921, p. 127) that experience of the later types of tanks was lost to the British Army because their operations “were mainly undertaken with the two Dominion Corps.”

³⁴ See figures in *Vol. I*, p. 548, and *Vol. XI*, p. 874; other figures are given in an Appendix to the present volume. The high proportion was also due to the Australians being mostly front line troops.

³⁵ E.g. after Bullecourt, 1917 (*Vol. IV*, p. 684) and Bellicourt, 1918 (*pp.* 879, 1048-9 of the present volume).

British colonials into natural soldiers, were recruiting for their army nearly twice as thoroughly as Australians, and maintaining in addition the navy whose standards the Diggers well knew. The best way of promoting such mutual knowledge would have been by a liberal exchange of carefully selected officers. Furthermore several shocks to "oversea" opinion could easily have been avoided by ensuring, whenever possible, that the troops employed with or beside dominion forces were thoroughly reliable. Several episodes that were thus made possible were outstanding in promoting mutual appreciation,⁸⁶ and any inconvenience involved in such a policy would have been well worth while.

Deep discontent occurred at one time in Palestine where, although Australian officers felt conscious that their realism rendered them fitter than the average of British officers for staff work, especially in an open campaign, British leaders, probably mistrusting the Australians' knowledge, tended to maintain a purely British staff. This grievance was only gradually removed.⁸⁷ In Gallipoli and France such friction was largely avoided by Birdwood's wisdom in building up an Australian staff.

It was proved to the hilt that dominion troops were most contented and effective under their own leaders and staffs, and with their fellow countrymen beside them; and probably so were the Americans. Yet the advantage of a single authority, of whatever nation, at each level of command, was evident to every private, though not always to field-m Marshals. It is true that the British military tradition did not always facilitate a quick comprehension of what was involved in "dominion status"; but everywhere British leadership was marked by an upright fairness and loyalty to all who served under it.

It was also very efficient in the vital matter of supply. In operations in Gallipoli Sir Ian Hamilton was set by his Government a task which, as first attempted, was impossible, and, despite his courage and imagination, he probably lacked the great strength to force both the Government and his subordinates to overcome the initial disadvantages. In Egypt and Palestine the command was fatally lacking in realism

⁸⁶ For example when the 7th British Division was put in at Bullecourt.

⁸⁷ For an account of this difficulty and the action taken see *Vol. VII, pp. 255-7.*

and driving force until the arrival of Allenby, who possessed both and was also better supported by his Government. On the Western Front the A.I.F. came under Haig and his army commanders, who, for the last eight months, were under Foch. Haig was an optimist of immense resolution, devoid of brilliance, but with unshakeable nerve. He was big enough to ignore at crucial times all personal considerations, and he learnt steadily from experience. Though he never understood the Australians, he was entirely fair to them, and if they suffered unnecessarily in the bludgeoning towards victory, his own infantry suffered as much; and, at a cost, victory came. In 1916 when his attempts to "break through" were held up, they were repeated again and again with the alternative object of "wearing down the enemy"; but, as no thought was directed to inventing a special technique for wearing down, they reduced the numerical strength of the attacker more quickly than that of the attacked.³⁸ By 1917 this costly experience had led to the evolution of the far more formidable technique of "step by step" battle by which, in favourable circumstances, a succession of really shattering blows was struck. But, again through lack of imagination, this technique continued to be applied when rain gave the advantage to the enemy and bogged the British Army in the morasses of Nonne Bosschen and Passchendaele.

At last in the tank battle at Cambrai Haig learnt the supreme value—and feasibility—of surprise, a lesson which the swift and extensive results of the German offensives in March and May 1918 also drove home. He never forgot this: his own stroke of August 8 was in some ways the most effective surprise on the Western Front; and, when its immediate consequences had ended, he rejected Foch's order to renew the

³⁸ The tragedy of Fromelles, in which a division of the A.I.F. lost 5,500 men, mostly in a single night, was due to muddled thinking by a highly trained staff. It was intended as a feint to keep German reserves away from the Somme battlefield. If the preparations for it, intentionally made obvious, had lasted longer they might have effected their object so long as the attack was not actually launched; but, from within a few hours of its launching, the fact that it was only a feint was necessarily known to the enemy. Most of the sorties at Anzac similarly made clear to the enemy within a few hours the very fact it was desired to conceal—that the real effort was elsewhere. The most effective feints of the A.I.F. were those which either did not go over the parapet, or else struck in real force at a valuable objective—Es Salt, Amman, Lone Pine. The capture of Lone Pine, a position of great value, was the most effective feint undertaken—in one respect too effective, since not only were all the local Turkish reserves drawn in, but the 9th Div. was rushed up from the Helles front, and happened to arrive just in time to stop the vital thrust at Chunuk Bair.

attack on the same front, and wisely secured the Generalissimo's consent to a surprise attack elsewhere.

After the holocausts of First Somme and Passchendaele it was constantly argued that the offensive had proved much more costly than defence.³⁹ This was both true and untrue. The losses of troops attacking in a well planned surprise were usually slight, and the success very great—as long as the surprise lasted. But neither side possessed a “shock” arm strong or swift enough to keep the surprise and confusion in operation for more than a few hours. From then onwards it was the defending troops who knew where their enemy was, and where he would probably strike, and the attacker had to face a well prepared, and usually hidden defence. It was in the dull bludgeoning to break through this that the losses of the attacking side became much the greater.

Haig always hoped that the initial surprise and confusion might be prolonged by cavalry carrying out its traditional rôle, but telephone, automobile, and machine-gun had changed all that. Cavalry was now too slow and vulnerable to carry out the principles of “cavalry” tactics on the highly organised Western Front, though it succeeded against the weak Turkish armies in Palestine and Mesopotamia. On August 8th near Harbonnières a dozen armoured cars effected as much as a cavalry brigade. Except for a first-rate mind—which Haig's was not—training in military history and tradition could actually confuse judgment in such matters; it is conceivable that, had Haig grasped earlier the possibilities of the tank, he might have forestalled history by securing an effective “mounted arm” at half the trouble and cost with which the British cavalry was maintained, almost uselessly, on the Western Front.⁴⁰

Of Foch's command the most important result directly experienced by the A.I.F., after the change of French policy on March 26th, was confidence instilled by the knowledge that a trusted leader was now watching the whole Western Front

³⁹ The adoption of defensive strategy by the British and French Governments after the war was probably due in part to the overwhelming horror with which their peoples recalled the losses and sufferings in these battles. This would cause ministers to listen rather to advisers of the defensive school.

⁴⁰ For British leadership, on the other hand, he it said that, although Ludendorff criticised it for being unable to make use of the considerable successes gained in the first stage of its big offensives, neither did the German command ever succeed in pressing similar successes to a decision. Ludendorff rejected the tank, and it was the British who introduced this and the second instrument of successful surprise—the unregistered barrage. Like Haig, the French maintained cavalry.

and carefully planning to seize opportunity. The events of 1917-18 show that even great and fair-minded leaders, if directly interested in one part of a combined struggle, could not be trusted to judge wisely as to the whole. Haig, Pétain, and Nivelle were each, at one time or another, perilously over-impressed by the dangers and opportunities of their own sections. Foch, becoming responsible for all sectors,⁴¹ exerted an admirably balanced judgment, almost certainly averted greater disasters than occurred, and seized the first real opportunity for counter-attack.

The Australian force produced the ablest commander under whom it came on the Western Front, Monash, and also Brudenell White, who, though his ability for staff work robbed him of the chance of command, constantly bore the responsibility for great decisions and, more than any other man, moulded the A.I.F. Both these were, by any fair criterion, great men; and great leaders were Bridges, Chauvel, Howse, Glasgow, Holmes, Gellibrand, Elliott, Leane, Rosenthal, Ryrie, Griffiths, Blamey, Hobbs and another score of outstanding personalities. Whether Monash possessed the ruthless will of the greatest fighting leaders may be strongly questioned, and he was fortunate in never having to carry unsupported the shock of a great reverse. But the range and tireless method of his mind were beyond any that came within the experience of the A.I.F. His men went into action feeling, usually with justification, that, whatever might lie ahead, at least everything was right behind them. A citizen soldier, going straight from the command of a division in May 1918 to what by August was practically that of an army, he had to learn much in a very short time, and in the three months in which he became famous he inevitably made mistakes by which doubtless he would have profited had the war continued.

But by the crude test of success few leaders in the British Empire could match his record. His administrative triumphs were as marked as his fighting ones. The problem of discipline behind the lines—in an Australian force—was completely solved, at least during his command of the 3rd Division, by his insistence that, "the staff is servant of the troops," and his infinite care in providing recreation, decencies and amenities.

⁴¹ Including actually, though not nominally, the Belgian.

Such were the military forces of what Professor J. B. S. Haldane has called "the world's most advanced democracy."⁴² Whatever moral their history contains for other nations the most urgent one is for Australians, inasmuch as not one of the causes that produced the effectiveness of the old A.I.F. is necessarily permanent. The Australia of to-day is different from that of 1914; the Australia of to-morrow, greatly industrialised, will be still more different. Some of the conditions that made the old A.I.F. were accidental, for others the nation itself was responsible. If there arise here the conditions that played such havoc when Europe turned to industry, nothing can avert similar wreckage here, and the loss of those qualities that the old A.I.F. drew from its contact with countryside. Or if social divisions increase with the artificiality of more highly organised society, the snobbery of fashion and publicity, or the servility that almost necessarily follows the co-existence of poverty and great wealth, then the qualities that the A.I.F. gained from its social equality will vanish with the causes that gave them birth. Indeed, failing basic measures, economic and cultural, the nation itself may be in danger of "racial" suicide. If what was admirable in its character is to be maintained in a changing world, this can be done only *by special planning* and vigorous determination to maintain those qualities.

The Old Force passed down the road to history. The dust of its march settled. The sound of its arms died. Upon a hundred battlefields the broken trees stretched their lean arms over sixty thousand of its graves. The time has arrived to sum its achievement.

The decisive victory in 1918 would have been impossible without the help of America, in reliance on which the whole campaign for 1918 was planned. It would also have been impossible without the British command of the seas, the endurance of the French, British and Russian armies for three years, and the British, French and American offensives in the final year.⁴³ The A.I.F. was so comparatively small a force that it had to lose those three initials from its postal address

⁴² *Callinicus*, p. 25. The freedom of the British dominions is little understood abroad, even in America, despite the examples of Ireland and Canada. The reaction of Australians to it has been described in *Vol. I, Chapter I*.

⁴³ To ask "Who won the war?" is like asking "On which leg does a table stand?"

when the A.E.F. poured into France. Yet those who were close enough to the events know that for France, Britain, and America, the course of the war in 1918 was made discernibly different by the spirit in these free men.

The first achievement of the A.I.F. was that at some stage, playing its full part with the Allies, it helped to save the world from a peace treaty dictated by Ludendorff. What such a treaty would have meant can only be conjectured; but the terms imposed on the Soviet leaders at Brest-Litovsk, compared with which those of the Versailles Treaty were a monument of equity, may be an indication. For the Australian people, as has already been said, such an ending meant almost certain elimination.

The second achievement was to furnish other nations with the measure of a then almost unknown democracy, or at least of a people reared in conditions closer to pure democracy than any nation, with the possible exception of the Swiss, had attained. That evidence gained Australia a hearing in the conference which closed the war and a place in the League of Nations.

The third, and perhaps a greater, achievement was to furnish that measure to itself and to its own nation. It is easy to forget the atmosphere of Australia in the days before the War of 1914-18. When the A.I.F. first sailed it left there a nation that did not yet know itself. Even the 1st Australian Division entered its first battle not knowing what manner of men Australians were. The people of the six States which formed the Commonwealth were much divided. Many an Australian had no confidence in the capacity of his people for any big enterprise. In numerous respects they were still six colonies rather than a single federated nation. Many Australians believed, and had said and written, that their people could support the discipline neither of an army and navy nor of successful industry. Critics both from within and from abroad had estimated that the Australian worker was less energetic than European and American workers. One well-known British journalist, Mr. Foster Fraser, had written that Australians were degenerating physically from the British stock, and it was on the writings of a Melbourne doctor that

he based his argument. Many of the older-fashioned Australians considered almost sacrilegious any pretence that goods of Australian make, or tradesmen and professional men of Australian training, from bootmakers to bishops, could be the equals of those from the older countries. If a capable leader was required, either for industry or for the army, he must be imported, they cried, from the old world. Many Australians would have trusted the capacity of an Australian office staff less than that of a staff of Americans or Englishmen. The section that did proclaim a belief in its native land often obtained that belief less from a knowledge of its own country than from an ignorance of others.

For the opportunity for Australians to know their own people had never arrived. It is in disaster that human character is most clearly exhibited, and though she had known fire, drought, and flood Australia had never seen the one trial that, despite civilised progress, all humanity still recognises—the test of a great war.

And then during four years in which nearly the whole world was so tested, the people in Australia looked on from afar at three hundred thousand of their own nation struggling amongst millions from the strongest and most progressive peoples of Europe and America. They saw their own men—those who had dwelt in the same street or been daily travellers in the same railway trains—flash across the world's consciousness like a shooting star. In the first straight rush up the Anzac hills in the dark, in the easy figures first seen on the ridges against the dawn sky, in the working parties stacking stores on the shelled beach without the turning of a head, in the stretcher-bearers walking, pipes in mouths, down a bullet-swept slope to a comrade's call, unconsciously setting a tradition that may work for centuries—in things seen daily from that first morning until the struggle ended, onlookers had recognised in these men qualities always vital to the human race. Australians watched the name of their country rise high in the esteem of the world's oldest and greatest nations. Every Australian bears that name proudly abroad to-day; and by the daily doings, great and small, which these pages have narrated, the Australian nation came to know itself.

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The first achievement of the A.I.F. was that at some stage, playing its full part with the Allies, it helped to save the world from a peace treaty dictated by Ludendorff. What such a treaty would have meant can only be conjectured; but the terms imposed on the Soviet leaders at Brest-Litovsk, compared with which those of the Versailles Treaty were a monument of equity, may be an indication. For the Australian people, as has already been said, such an ending meant almost certain elimination.

The second achievement was to furnish other nations with the measure of a then almost unknown democracy, or at least of a people reared in conditions closer to pure democracy than any nation, with the possible exception of the Swiss, had attained. That evidence gained Australia a hearing in the conference which closed the war and a place in the League of Nations.

The third, and perhaps a greater, achievement was to furnish that measure to itself and to its own nation. It is easy to forget the atmosphere of Australia in the days before the War of 1914-18. When the A.I.F. first sailed it left there a nation that did not yet know itself. Even the 1st Australian Division entered its first battle not knowing what manner of men Australians were. The people of the six States which formed the Commonwealth were much divided. Many an Australian had no confidence in the capacity of his people for any big enterprise. In numerous respects they were still six colonies rather than a single federated nation. Many Australians believed, and had said and written, that their people could support the discipline neither of an army and navy nor of successful industry. Critics both from within and from abroad had estimated that the Australian worker was less energetic than European and American workers. One well-known British journalist, Mr. Foster Fraser, had written that Australians were degenerating physically from the British stock, and it was on the writings of a Melbourne doctor that

he based his argument. Many of the older-fashioned Australians considered almost sacrilegious any pretence that goods of Australian make, or tradesmen and professional men of Australian training, from bootmakers to bishops, could be the equals of those from the older countries. If a capable leader was required, either for industry or for the army, he must be imported, they cried, from the old world. Many Australians would have trusted the capacity of an Australian office staff less than that of a staff of Americans or Englishmen. The section that did proclaim a belief in its native land often obtained that belief less from a knowledge of its own country than from an ignorance of others.

For the opportunity for Australians to know their own people had never arrived. It is in disaster that human character is most clearly exhibited, and though she had known fire, drought, and flood Australia had never seen the one trial that, despite civilised progress, all humanity still recognises—the test of a great war.

And then during four years in which nearly the whole world was so tested, the people in Australia looked on from afar at three hundred thousand of their own nation struggling amongst millions from the strongest and most progressive peoples of Europe and America. They saw their own men—those who had dwelt in the same street or been daily travellers in the same railway trains—flash across the world's consciousness like a shooting star. In the first straight rush up the Anzac hills in the dark, in the easy figures first seen on the ridges against the dawn sky, in the working parties stacking stores on the shelled beach without the turning of a head, in the stretcher-bearers walking, pipes in mouths, down a bullet-swept slope to a comrade's call, unconsciously setting a tradition that may work for centuries—in things seen daily from that first morning until the struggle ended, onlookers had recognised in these men qualities always vital to the human race. Australians watched the name of their country rise high in the esteem of the world's oldest and greatest nations. Every Australian bears that name proudly abroad to-day; and by the daily doings, great and small, which these pages have narrated, the Australian nation came to know itself.

Yet one aim that, more than any other, buoyed up the Australian soldier and his Allies in the later trials of those four years—to save their children from having to fight out the contest again—was not attained. The need for a post-war effort, as sustained and urgent as that of war itself, to make the settlement effective was then realised by few even of the world's brightest minds. The tired victors simply sank into peace and presented their former opponents with neither of the two conditions necessary to make it durable—first, inducement to live contentedly under the settlement or legally secured modifications of it, and, second, effective deterrent from the breach of it by force. A second A.I.F., in every sense the child of the first, is helping its British comrades and their Allies to fight out the same issues in even clearer form to-day. Humanity, whose fate again hangs on their success, prays that their deeds may be crowned with a settlement devised and maintained with the wisdom of experience which, alas, was not available to ensure full reward for the effort of which these pages tell.

But that effort stands. The meaner struggles of politics cannot erase one tittle from the story of that terrible but more generous struggle in the holly scrub of Gallipoli or under the rain-clouds of France or the glare of Sinai.

Twenty-three years ago the arms were handed in. The rifles were locked in the rack. The horses were sold. The guns were sheeted and parked in storage for other gunners. The familiar faded-green uniform disappeared from the streets.

But the Australian Imperial Force is not dead. That famous army of generous men marches still down the long lane of its country's history, with bands playing and rifles slung, with packs on shoulders, white dust on boots, and bayonet scabbards and entrenching tools flapping on countless thighs—as the French countryfolk and the fellaheen of Egypt knew it.

What these men did nothing can alter now. The good and the bad, the greatness and smallness of their story will stand. Whatever of glory it contains nothing now can lessen. It rises, as it will always rise, above the mists of ages, a monument to great-hearted men; and, for their nation, a possession for ever.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

MILITARY FORCES OF THE BRITISH EMPIRE IN THE FIRST WORLD WAR (Tables extracted from the "Statistics of the Military Effort of the British Empire.")*

RECRUITMENT IN PROPORTION TO POPULATION

*For statistics of Allied and enemy forces, and details of Australian enlistments, casualties, etc., the reader is referred to Vol. XI, pp. 871-4, and to the *Australian Official Medical History*, Vol. II, pp. 860 et seq., and Vol. III Chapter XVII.

| Country. | Total enlistments from all sources to 11th Nov. 1918. | Estimated total population in July, 1914. | Percentage of total population represented by enlistments. | Estimated male population in July, 1914. | Percentage of male population represented by enlistments. |
|-----------|---|---|--|--|---|
| † England | 4,006,158 | *34,618,346 | 11.57 | 16,681,181 | 24.02 |
| † Wales | 272,924 | 2,489,202 | 10.96 | 1,268,284 | 21.52 |
| Scotland | 557,618 | 4,849,500 | 11.50 | 2,351,843 | 23.71 |
| Ireland | 134,202 | 4,374,500 | 3.07 | 2,184,193 | 6.14 |
| Total | 4,970,902 | 46,331,548 | 10.73 | 22,485,501 | 22.11 |

* In the population of England, the Isle of Man (50,000) is included, but the Channel Islands (100,000) are not included.

† Excluding Monmouthshire.

| Country. | Total sent overseas or undergoing training as at 1st Nov. 1918. | Estimated total white male population at July, 1911. | Percentage of total white male population represented by total recruited. |
|----------------|---|--|---|
| *Canada | 458,218 | 3,400,000 | 13.48 |
| Australia | 331,814 | 2,470,000 | 13.43 |
| New Zealand | 112,223 | 580,000 | 19.35 |
| ††South Africa | 76,184 | 685,000 | 11.12 |
| Newfoundland | 6,173 | | ... |

* Canada—The total population is only shown in respect of those born in Canada or in British Isles.

† South Africa—The total population shown comprises the Cape Province, Natal, the Transvaal, and the Orange Free State.

†† Includes East Africa, but excludes troops employed in the German South-West African campaign who number approximately 50,000.

It is to be noted that the percentages in the lower table are based on troops sent overseas or undergoing training at the end of the war, whereas those in the upper are based on enlistments. The military enlistments in Australia were 412,953 which would give a percentage of 16.72. Many who enlisted, however, were discharged from camps of training without leaving Australia.

CASUALTIES

APPROXIMATE NUMBER OF CASUALTIES FROM 4TH AUGUST, 1914 TO 31ST DECEMBER, 1920

| | Number of soldiers who lost their lives in, and through, the Great War.* | | | Number of wounds received by soldiers. | | | Number of reported prisoners of war. | | |
|-----------------------------|--|--------------|---------|--|--------------|-----------|--------------------------------------|--------------|---------|
| | Officers. | Other Ranks. | Total. | Officers. | Other Ranks. | Total. | Officers. | Other Ranks. | Total. |
| † British Isles | 37,452 | 664,958 | 702,410 | 79,445 | 1,583,180 | 1,662,625 | 6,482 | 163,907 | 170,389 |
| ‡ Indian Empire (a) British | 1,382 | 1,011 | 2,393 | 1,733 | 592 | 2,325 | 172 | 22 | 194 |
| (b) Indian | 904 | 61,152 | 62,056 | 1,680 | 65,209 | 66,889 | 258 | 10,812 | 11,070 |
| Dominion of Canada .. . | 2,887 | 53,752 | 56,639 | 6,347 | 143,385 | 149,732 | 236 | 3,493 | 3,729 |
| Commonwealth of Australia | 2,862 | 56,468 | 59,330 | 6,304 | 145,867 | 152,171 | 173 | 3,911 | 4,084 |
| Dominion of New Zealand .. | 735 | 15,976 | 16,711 | 1,724 | 39,593 | 41,317 | 10 | 488 | 498 |
| Union of South Africa .. . | 336 | 6,785 | 7,121 | 569 | 11,460 | 12,029 | 70 | 1,468 | 1,538 |
| Newfoundland | 54 | 1,150 | 1,204 | 65 | 2,249 | 2,314 | 6 | 144 | 150 |
| Other Colonies | 91 | 416 | 507 | 158 | 652 | 810 | .. | | |
| Total | 46,703 | 861,668 | 908,371 | 98,025 | 1,992,187 | 2,090,212 | 7,407 | 184,245 | 191,652 |

* Killed in action, died of wounds, died as prisoners of war, and missing officers and other ranks whose deaths have been accepted for official purposes.

† Regular and Territorial Forces and Royal Naval Division.

‡ Units and drafts serving with the Indian Army.

Note by Australian Official Historian. It is now estimated that the figure 331,814, representing embarkations from Australia, includes some 6,000 embarkations by men who had already once embarked, and who returned and re-enlisted.

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—3RD DIVISION, 1, 25, 34, 44n, 68, 74, 110, 157, 206, 229n, 243, 251, 253n, 266, 285n, 440n, 504n, 522n, 528n, 768, 885n; peaceful penetration, Apr., 45-8; Somme-Ancre Line, 62; extends across Ancre, 22 Apr., 63; Bray-Corbie Rd., 67; at Morlinc., 6-7 May, 84-7, 2nd Div. relves., 10 May, 92, 94; at Villers-Bret., 25 May, 160, King reviews, 1916, 185, Haig, 1917, 186; Gellibrand commands, 193n; nr. Morlinc., 10-11 June, 240; 2nd Div. relves. 28-29 June, 252; relves. 4th Div., 347; its discipline., 487n, 1084, 1092; Amers. atchd. to, 26-27 July, 510; raids Acroche Wd., 7 Aug., 523. B. of Amiens: 492, 513, 519, 536, 538, 540, 544, tanks with, 573-4; further ops., 599, 601, 618-19, 9-13 Aug., 678, 680, Proyart ops., 685-92, Méricourt, 701-3, Proyart capt'd., 703-11; cas., 7-14 Aug., 684n; short rest, 716, 717; rôle, 22 Aug., 725-6, attk., Bray, 732, 761, Suzanne and Vaux Wd., 25-26 Aug., 764-8, 25 Aug., 769-70, its thrust 27-28 Aug., 774-9, at Cléry, 29-30 Aug., 790-804; in Monash's new plan, 29 Aug., 787; staff, 30 Aug., 801; its exhaustg. thrust, 28-30 Aug., 805-6, Mt. St. Quentin and Péronne, 28 Aug.-2 Sep.: 841, 845-8, 861, 862, Bouchavesnes, ridge, 31 Aug., 818-21, 828-9, 830, 1 Sep., 832-3, 2 Sep., 856n, 961-2, follows Ger. retiremt., 872, 880-5, cas., 874n; need for rest, 942. B. of Hind. Line: plan, 945, 948, in positn. for, 956, arty. with, 957n, in main offse., 958-68, 975-81, 1000-1, 1012, tanks with, 989n, shares food and ammunn. with Amers., 999, cas., 28 Sep.-2 Oct., 1013n, plans for 2-3 Oct., 1014; after Armistice, 1053n, see also 9th, 10th and 11th Inf. Bdes.

—4TH DIVISION, 1, 34, 159, 223n, 227n, 231, 242, 244, 254, 257, 266, 311, 595n; on Villers-Bret. frnt., 67; H.Q. shelled Allonville, 30-31 May, 109n; Amers. with, 20 May, 157; defces. strengthened, 161; questn. of command, 196n; flank action nr. Morlanc., 10-11 June, 240; its memory of Bullecourt, 245; under strength, 252n; B. of Hamel, 307, rôle, 251; Clemenceau visits, 334-5; 3rd Div. relves., July, 347. B. of Amiens: 492-3, 508-11, 512, 526n, 540n, 546, 547-50, 556-71, 585-94, 597-8, 601, 602n; cas., 7-14 Aug., 684n; Lihons ops., 9-10 Aug., 648, 649-50, its rôle, 619, 619, arty. disposns., 620n, 3rd Div. relves., 10 Aug., 668, 687, relves. 1st Div., 16 Aug., 717, peaceful penetration, 16-18 Aug., 719, rôle, 23 Aug., 734, arty. with, 735n, 34 French Div. relves., 24 Aug., 773; in rest, Sep., 879, moves to front, 10 Sep., 885; peaceful penetration, 10-15 Sep., 887, 888-9, 891n-2n; Anzac leave begins, 14 Sep., 896; B. of Hind. Outpost-Line: 902-7,

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plans, 892-4, strength of bns., 896, cas., 931*n*, to rest, 21 *Sep.*, 935; need for rest, 942; Aust. Mission attachd. to Amers., 947, 46 Div. relives., 24 *Sep.*, 951, 953, offers. appreciate Amer. qualities, 989, moves to front, 10-11 *Nov.*, 1049, 1053; after Armistice, 1053*n*; combines with 1st Div., *Mar.*, 1919, 1061; quickness of original training, 1082; *see also* 4th, 12th, and 13th Inf. Bdes.

—5TH DIVISION, 1, 34, 48, 191, 229*n*, 285*n*, 521, 784; extends across Somme, *Apr.*, 63, 67; nr. Sailly-Laurette, 7-8 *May*, 87, 89, 91, 227*n*; under strength, 252*n*; B. of Hamel, 271, 319, 334; advces., 7-8 *July*, 346-7, Ger. comment on its activity, Morlact., 482, to attk. Brick Beacon, 25 *July*, 514; practises with tanks, 496*n*; III Corps relives., 1 *Aug.*, 504, 509. B. of Amiens: 492-3, 519, 534, 540*n*, 545-60, 576, 579-83, 585, 599, to advce. with 1st Cav. Bde., 502, assembly, 526*n*, rôle, 9 *Aug.*, 619; Lihons ops., 9-10 *Aug.*, 620*n*, 636-7, Lihons, lack of co-ord., 682; cas., 659*n*, lack of co-ord., nr. Froyart, 7-14 *Aug.*, 684*n*; advces. nr. Froyart, 16-18 *Aug.*, 723-4; nr. Chaignolles, 18-23 *Aug.*, 715, 717, 736, 737; nr. Foucaucourt, 771-4; Mt. St. Quentin and Péronne, 28 *Aug.*-2 *Sep.*: 805, 822, 825, 831-2, 851, plans, 781, 786-7, 1-2 *Sep.*, attk. on Péronne, 831-40, 848-51, 2 *Sep.*, 856*n*, captures Péronne, 855, 863-8, 15 Bde. takes over div. front, 870; follows Ger. retreat, 5-6 *Sep.*, 872, 880; cas., 31 *Aug.*-2 *Sep.*, 874*n*; reported need for rest, 875, 942; 4 Div. relives., 10-11 *Sep.*, 888. B. of Hind. Line: plans, 945, 947-8, in positn., 28 *Sep.*, 956, arty. with, 957*n*, tanks with, 989*n*, main offsv., 29 *Sep.*, 958-60, 968-75, 982*n*, 997, 1000, 1 *Oct.*, 1009, 1012, plans for 2-3 *Oct.*, 1014, cas., 28 *Sep.*-2 *Oct.*, 1013*n*-14*n*; losses at Fromelles, 994*n*; after Armistice, 1053*n*, 1061; rapid original training of, 1082; *see also* 8th, 14th and 15th Bdes.

—ARMY MEDICAL CORPS, cas. at Ville and Morlact., 19 *May*, 146*n*; in B. of Hind. Line, 1013*n*; questn. of colour patches, 206*n*; on Salisbury Plain, 1061*n*; Hosps. pass to civiln. control, 1 *July*, 1921, 1073; motor amb., 145*n*, 573; horsed amb., 146*n*, 573*n*.

Casualty Clearing Stations: 3rd, to Germany aft. Armistice, 1072.

Field Ambulances: 160*n*, 1004*n*; cas., 7-14 *Aug.*, 684*n*, 23-26 *Aug.*, 760*n*. 4th, 573*n*. 5th, 145*n*, 238*n*. 6th, 145*n*, 238*n*. 7th, 8th, 1067. 12th, 312*n*. 13th, 25*n*, 312*n*, 715*n*.

See also MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS; STRETCHER-BEARERS, WOUNDED.

—ARMY NURSING SERVICE, quality of, 1078.

—ARMY SERVICE CORPS, quality of, 1079; 27th Company, 715*n*; bakeries, 1069.

—ARTILLERY, "crash" bombdmts., 384, duel across Somme, 8 *Aug.*, 565, 567, 570 *et seq.*, 588 *et seq.*, 594 *et seq.*, quality of dvrs., 1079.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE—*continued.*

Aust. Siege Bde. (36th Heavy Artillery Group), 421*n*; 2nd Siege Bty., 421*n*. **Divisional Artilleries:** rejoin own divns., *July*, 370*n*. 1st, 404, 788*n*; 19 *July*, 428; in B. of Amiens, 639, 669, cas., 7-14 *Aug.*, 684*n*; cas., 23-26 *Aug.*, 760*n*; B. of Hind. Line, 957*n*, 1015*n*, 1017*n*. 2nd, nr. Morlact., *June*, 221, 227; barrage, Hamel, 271, 282, Mound, 17-18 *July*, 370*n*; in Lihons ops., 9 *Aug.*, 620*n*; cas., 7-14 *Aug.*, 684*n*; 23 *Aug.*, 747*n*; Mt. St. Quentin and Péronne, 788*n*, 831*n*, 832*n*, 855-6, 864; B. of Hind. Line, 957*n*, 1015*n*, 1017*n*, 1030*n*, Montbrehain, 5 *Oct.*, 1033*n*; with 30 Amer. Div., 8 *Oct.*, 1047*n*; relived., 1048*n*. 3rd, nr. Bray-Corbis Rd., 14 *May*, 96, nr. Morlact., 10 *June*, 227*n*, B. of Amiens, 501, 702*n*, 704, cas., 7-14 *Aug.*, 684*n*; N. of Somme, 22-23 *Aug.*, 727*n*, 752*n*, Mt. St. Quentin and Péronne, 778*n*, 788*n*, 794, 801, 808*n*, 818*n*, 827; B. of Hind. Line, 948, 957*n*, 1014-15, cas., 28 *Sep.*-2 *Oct.*, 1013*n*; with Amers., 1047*n*, 1048*n*; with IX Corps, 1048, 1049; after Armistice, 1053*n*. 4th, B. of Amiens, 597-8, 620*n*, cas., 7-14 *Aug.*, 684*n*; B. of Hind. Outpost-Line, 18 *Sep.*, 898*n*; B. of Hind. Line, 954*n*, 1015*n*; with 27 Amer. Div., 957*n*, 959*n*, Montbrehain, 5 *Oct.*, 1033*n*; with 30 Amer. Div., 1047*n*; with IX Corps, 1048, 1049; raised, in 1916, from untrained men, 1082. 5th, 720*n*; nr. Ville, *May*, 139*n*, 159; nr. Morlact., 10 *June*, 227*n*; B. of Amiens, 656*n*, cas., 7-14 *Aug.*, 684*n*; Mt. St. Quentin and Péronne, 788*n*, 825, 832*n*, 855-6, B. of Hind. Outpost-Line, 18 *Sep.*, 898*n*; B. of Hind. Line, 948, 957*n*, 1015*n*, cas., 28 *Sep.*-2 *Oct.*, 1014*n*; Montbrehain, 1033*n*; with Amers., 1047*n*, 1048*n*; with IX Corps, 1048; raised, in 1916, from untrained men, 1082. **A.F.A. Brigades:** 1st, 429, 1082. at Merris, 29-30 *July*, 432*n*; B. of Amiens, 620*n*, 621*n*, 639; Hind. Line, 898*n*, 957*n*. 2nd, 735*n*; B. of Amiens, 620, 639*n*; Hind. Line, 898*n*, 957*n*, 1018*n*. 3rd, 75*n*, 112*n*, 735*n*; nr. Dernancourt, 29-30 *Apr.*, 66; nr. Morlact., 10-11 *June*, 227*n*, 239*n*, 29-30 *July*, 515*n*; Mt. St. Quentin and Péronne, 788*n*, 804*n*, 818*n*, 856*n*, 861*n*; Hind. Line, 880, 898*n*, 957*n*, 978*n*, 1015*n*. 4th, 112*n*, 720*n*, 735*n*, 747*n*; nr. Morlact., 10 *June*, 227*n*; Mt. St. Quentin, 807, 810*n*, 822, 823, 861; Hind. Line, 898*n*, 957*n*, 1017; with Amers., 957*n*, 1048*n*. 5th, 112*n*, 333*n*, 735*n*; Mt. St. Quentin, 808*n*, 810*n*, 861*n*; Hind. Line, 898*n*, 957*n*, 1017; with Amers., 957*n*, 1048*n*. 6th, 66, 70*n*, 112*n*, 735*n*; nr. Morlact., 5-6 *May*, 75*n*, 10-11 *June*, 227*n*, 239*n*; B. of Amiens, 544*n*, 620*n*; Mt. St. Quentin, 29-30 *Aug.*, 788*n*; Hind. Line, 898*n*, 957*n*, 1015*n*, 1017*n*, Montbrehain, 5 *Oct.*, 1033*n*; with 30 Amer. Div., 1047*n*, 1048*n*. 7th, 735*n*, 776*n*, 778*n*;

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Mt. St. Quentin, 794, 818*n*; Hind. Line, 898*n*, 957*n*, 978*n*, 1000*n*; with 27 Amer. Div., 1048*n*. 8*th*, 735*n*, 778*n*; B. of Amiens, 549*n*; Mt. St. Quentin, 818*n*; Hind. Line, 898*n*, 957*n*, 978*n*; with 30 Amer. Div., 1048*n*. 10*th*, 257*n*, 735*n*, nr. Morlinc., 29-30 July, 515*n*; B. of Amiens, 549*n*, 568*n*, 571, 620*n*, 711; Hind. Line, 898*n*, 957*n*; with 30 Amer. Div., 1048*n*. 11*th*, 257*n*, 735*n*; nr. Morlinc., 515*n*; B. of Amiens, 595, 711; Hind. Line, 898*n*, 919*n*, 957*n*; with 30 Amer. Div., 1048*n*. 12*th*, 429, 735*n*; nr. Merris, 29-30 July, 432*n*, 433; B. of Amiens, 620*n*; Mt. St. Quentin, 788*n*, 832*n*; Hind. Line, 898*n*, 1015*n*, 1017*n*; Montbrechain, 5 Oct., 1033*n*; with Amers., 1047*n*, 1048*n*. 13*th*, 257*n*, 735*n*; nr. Morlinc., 29-30 July, 515*n*; B. of Amiens, 549*n*, 620*n*, 624*n*; S. of Somme, 23 Aug., 755*n*; Hind. Line, 898*n*, 957*n*, 970, 1002*n*, 1007; with 30 Amer. Div., 1048*n*. 14*th*, 257*n*, 735*n*; nr. Morlinc., 29-30 July, 515*n*; B. of Amiens, 544*n*, 620*n*; S. of Somme, 23 Aug., 755*n*; Hind. Line, 898*n*, 957*n*, 981, 1000, 1002*n*; with 27 Amer. Div., 1048*n*. A.F. Batteries: 5*th*, 6*th*, 1018*n*. 10*th*, 807-8. 11*th*, 807, 1026, 1047*n*. 12*th*, 135*n*, 807, 808*n*, 843*n*. 13*th*, 861*n*, 869*n*, 1026. 14*th*, 1018*n*. 15*th*, 135*n*, 284*n*, 1018*n*. 16*th*, 321. 25*th*, 26*th*, 829*n*. 29*th*, 1047*n*. 37*th*, 596, 922*n*, 1047*n*. 38*th*, 571-2, 596, 922, 1048*n*. 39*th*, 568, 596. 41*st*, 919*n*. 42*nd*, 1048*n*. 43*rd*, 1047*n*. 49*th*, 549*n*, 753, 971. 50*th*, 753. 51*st*, 549*n*. 53*rd*, 545, 580, 749*n*. 55*th*, 749*n*, 971*n*. 101*st*, 433, 640*n*. 103*rd*, 284*n*. 104*th*, 135*n*, 807-8. 105*th*, 284*n*. 106*th*, 544*n*. 107*th*, 108*th*, 96, 284*n*. 110*th*, 572, 909*n*. 111*th*, 595, 1048*n*. 113*th*, 749*n*, 753, 1048*n*. 3*rd* Div. Ammn. Col., 776*n*. See also ARTILLERY

—CYCLIST CORPS, 885

—DENTAL SERVICES, 1069

—DEPOTS: A.I.F. Depots in U.K., 192, 214, 1069, 1071, 1072; Depots in Egypt, 1082

—ENGINEERS, cas. at Ville and Morlinc., 19 May, 146*n*; bridges at Ville, 113-17, over Somme, 778*n*, 785, 787-8, 789*n*, 790, 792, 809, 852; B. of Amiens, 503, 547, 602, 617; Hind. Line, 947, 948, 957, 959, 970. Divisional Engineers: 1*st*, cas., 7-14 Aug., 684*n*, 23-26 Aug., 760*n*. 2*nd*, 789*n*. 3*rd*, cas., 7-14 Aug., 684*n*, 28 Sep.-2 Oct., 1013*n*. 4*th*, cas., 7-14 Aug., 684*n*. 5*th*, 789*n*; cas., 28 Sep.-2 Oct., 1014*n*. Field Companies: 4*th*, nr. Hamel, 274*n*, 303, 311-12. 5*th*, at Ville, 19 May, 140; B. of Amiens, 503*n*, 540*n*, 547*n*; on Somme, 785, 788*n*, 790, 809. 6*th*, at Ville, 14-19 May, 112, 113-17, 122; B. of Amiens, 503*n*; on Somme, 789*n*, 822, 865*n*. 7*th*, 237*n*; on Somme, 784, 788*n*, 789, 832*n*. 8*th*, 603*n*, 788*n*. 9*th*, 503*n*, 547*n*. 10*th*, 503*n*, 547*n*, 778*n*. 11*th*, clears mine-field, 1 Oct., 989*n*; explores Tunnel,

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1007*n*. 12*th*, B. of Hamel, 274, 597, 602. 13*th*, 274*n*, 503*n*, 547*n*, 715*n*. 14*th*, 1007*n*; on Somme, 832*n*, 849*n*. 15*th*, 503*n*, 1007*n*; on Somme, 788*n*, 832*n*. 1*st* Army Troops Coy., 500*n*, 1044*n*. See also TUNNELLING CORPS (below)

—FLYING CORPS, see AUST. FLYING CORPS

—INFANTRY. 1*st* Brigade—N.S.W.; 1*st*, 2*nd*, 3*rd*, 4*th* Bns.—193, 386*n*, 391*n*, 392*n*, 595*n*; peaceful pentrn. begins, 49-52, 56-7, 382-3; relves. 2*nd* Bde., 19 May, 54; 3*rd* Bde. relves. Merris, 28 May, 384; nr. Meteren, 8-10 June, 391, 394; at Merris, 394-5, 400-3, 9 July, 409-23; results of peaceful penetration, 11 July, 420-1; B. of Amiens, 512, 601*n*, 617, Chipilly, 649*n*, 650-4, Lihons, 669, 678, cas., 7-14 Aug. 684*n*, 13 Bde. relves., 685; advance S. of Somme, 23-26 Aug., 734-9, 743, 748-57, 760, 769, 771, cas., 760*n*; peaceful penetration, 10-11 Sep., 887-90; Hind. Outpost-Line, 895, 899-900, 911, 912-14, 916-17, 932-4, 939-40, cas., 18-19 Sep., 931*n*. 2*nd* Brigade—Vic.; 5*th*, 6*th*, 7*th*, 8*th* Bns.—204, 386*n*, 720*n*, peaceful penetration nr. Merris begins, May, 49-54, 7-16 June, 389, 392-4, 395-400, 9-11 July, 409*n*, 410-11, 420, 3*rd* Bde. relves., 423, 425; B. of Amiens, 601*n*, advance to Lihons, 620, 630-2, 635-40, 642-5, 653 *et seq.*, 669-83, 1*st* Bde. relves., 11 Aug., 678, cas., 7-14 Aug., 684*n*; advance S. of Somme, 23-26 Aug., 734-6, 739-41, 743-8, 754, 769, cas., 740, 760*n*, by gas, 771*n*; 20 Sep., 933. 3*rd* Brigade—Q'land; S. Aust., W. Aust., Tas.; 9*th*, 10*th*, 11*th*, 12*th* Bns.—vi, 289, 425, 528*n*, 698, 1067*n*; peaceful penetration begins, May, 50-2, 55, 57, 60*n*; at Mont de Merris, 28 May-2 June, 384-9, cas., 2 June, 388; 2*nd* Bde. relves., 5 June, 389, 391; nr. Merris, 400, 401-2, 404-7; 1*st* Bde. relves., 409*n*; nr. Meteren, 423-7; attacks Merris, 19 July, 429-31. captures it, 431-8; B. of Amiens, 601*n*, advance to Lihons, 620, 630, 653-8, 661-3, 664, 666-78, 719, cas., 7-14 Aug., 684*n*; advance S. of Somme, 735-6, 755-60, 764, 768*n*, 769-71, cas., 23-26 Aug., 760*n*; Hind. Outpost-Line, 897, 898, 900-2, 906, 910-12, 914 *et seq.*, 927-8, 935, cas., 18-19 Sep., 931*n*. 4*th* Brigade—all States; 13*th*, 14*th*, 15*th*, 16*th* Bns.—42*n*, 193, 204, 205, 259*n*, 272, 275, 276, 331, 333*n*, 743*n*, 876; shelled at Allonville, 30-31 May, 109*n*; raids enemy trenches, 13-15 June, 240-1; Amers. with, 263-6, 272; strength before Hamel, 264, 265*n*; trains with tanks, 266-7; W. M. Hughes visits, 2 July, 273*n*; B. of Hamel, 274, 275, 280, 283 *et seq.*, 299 *et seq.*, 329, cas., 326; after Hamel, 347; clash between Aust. patrols, 440*n*; B. of Amiens, 493, 510-11, 520*n*, 526*n*, 547, 549*n*, 562-80, 588-99, 601-2, 617, 702, cas., 7-14 Aug., 684*n*; nr. Madame Wood, 16-19 Aug., 719-20, 723, 23 Aug. (McCarthy's attack), 742-3; Hind.

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Outpost-Line, 902-7, 909-10, 917-22, 926 *et seq.*, 935n, cas., 18-19 Sep., 931n; shortage of rations in, aff. Armistice, 1053. **5th Brigade**—N.S.W.: 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th Bns.—25n, 38n, 39, 226n, 650n, 780, 788-9, 1028; nr. Morlancourt, 94-6, Gers. attack 14 May, 96-104, raid on sleeping Gers., 104-8, bde. attks., 19 May, 108, 111, 139-41, 143, cas., 146n, 24-26 May, 219, Ger. raid, 5 June, 220-2; on Villers-Bret. front, 29 June, 266n, 6 Bde. relieves, 2-3 July, 275; Sgt. Brown's raid, 339-41; relieves, 6 Bde., 6 July, 339; peaceful penetrn. on Roman rd., 9-12 July, 360-3, 15-18 July, 368-70, 372; B. of Amiens, 492, 526 *et seq.*, 534-6, 540, 542, 543-4, 545, 9-11 Aug., 637-8, 645-9, 678-81, 688n, 689, cas., 7-14 Aug., 681, 684n; Mt. St. Quentin, approach Ommiècourt, 780-7, 790-1, plan, 781, 796, 804-5, past Cléry, 806-9, main attk., 31 Aug., 809-18, 821, 823-34, 1 Sep., 835, 839, 840, 841n, cas., 31 Aug.-2 Sep., 874n; 19 Bn. disbanded, 937, 1048n; B. of Hind. Line, 2-3 Oct., 1015 *et seq.*, 1021-9, cas., 1-3 Oct., 1026n; Montbrehain, 5 Oct., 1041. **6th Brigade**—Vic.: 21st, 22nd, 23rd, 24th Bns.—12, 25, 26, 27, 30n, 33n, 38, 40, 41, 95, 104, 105, 223n, 266, 267, 271, 331n, 375, 376n, 487-8, 528n; typical life of a coy. ("Brewery Coy.", q.v.), 9-18; nr. Ville, 11 May, 94-5, capture Ville, 19 May, 108-39, 141-47, cas., 146n; nr. Morlancourt, 224, 10-11 June, 239; raids Ger. trenches, 10-14 June, 239-41; W. M. Hughes visits, 2 July, 273n; relieves, 5 Bde., 2-3 July, 275; B. of Hamel, 266-7, 297-9, 307-9, 312-13, 329, cas., 326; decisn. to advance outposts, 5 July, 338-9, 5 Bde. relieves, 339, 360; nr. Villers-Bret., 21 July, 375-6; Amers. attchd. to, 510; B. of Amiens, 492, 527n, 532-3, 599, cas., 7-14 Aug., 684n; nr. Herleville, 719-23, advance S. of Somme, 773, 775, 779-80, 782, cas., 722; Mt. St. Quentin, approach, 788-9, 796, 805, 821-6, advance, 31 Aug., 830-4, attk., 1 Sep., 835-6, 839-46, in afternoon, 843-5, 851, 853, 855, 870n, cas., 31 Aug.-2 Sep., 874n; Hind. Line, 2-4 Oct., 1015, 1025-7, Montbrehain, 1031-43, cas., 3-5 Oct., 1043n; 21 Bn. disbanded, 937, 939, 1048n. **7th Brigade**—O'land, S. Aust., W. Aust., Tas.: 25th, 26th, 27th, 28th Bns.—33n, 38, 40, 41, 64, 239, 348, 514, 715, 780; at Ville, 19 May, 145; attk. on Morlancourt, 10-11 June, 219, 223-41; B. of Hamel, 271, 278-9, 284, 298-9, cas., 326; advances outposts, 5 July, 338-9; 5 Bde. relieves, 360n; peaceful penetration, Villers-Bret., 8 July, 348-52, 379, 9 July, 353-60, nr. Monument, 363-6; attks. Mound, 17-18 July, 366-74, cas., 375; 6 Bde. relieves, 19 July, 376n; B. of Amiens, 482, 504n, 527, 529, 530, 531-3, 540-1, 542, 543, 545, 547, 9 Aug., 637, 644-5, 647, 648, 10 Aug., 654-7, 667, 11 Aug., 678-9, cas., 7-14 Aug.,

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